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Thesis

STORYTELLING – AN ACT OF LIBERATION: CHILDREN'S (AND TEENAGER) BOOKS AS MEANS OF LIBERATION, SUPPORT OR SUPPRESSION;

ANALYZING BOOKS FROM GERMAN SPEAKING COUNTRIES (SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA, GERMANY) FROM BEFORE 1900, AND AFTER 1968

BY

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Staatsexamen

Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, 1965

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We have to overcome boundaries, not with a gun in our hand, but by telling stories.

Liv Ullmann,
Norwegian actress

Women may hold a key to replacing violence with speaking, bringing private feuds into public places, and healing wounds which otherwise fester from generation to generation – in short, to establish democracy and healing.

Carol Gilligan,
American Feminist Psychologist

Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can't be helped. And so I step up, into darkness within; or else the light.

Margaret Atwood
Canadian Writer

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CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....vi

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.....xiv

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION.....1

2. GENESIS 3, SERMON.....49

Exegetical Comments.....58

3. THE MISSIONARY CHILD.....65

Johanna Spyri: *Gritli's Kinder and Heidi*.....65

Gritli's Kinder.....67

Heidi.....74

2 Kings 5:1-7.....93

Hesba Stretton and the Religious Tract Society.....101

Religious Children's and Adolescents' Literature in Germany:

Ottilie Wildermuth.....107

Der Peterli von Emmental.....111

German Tracts for Children and Adolescents.....121

Helene Christaller *Die kleine Jüngerin*.....121

4. EROS AND SEXUALITY IN 19TH CENTURY GERMANY...130

Eros and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Germany.....131

The Silly Teenagers' Stories.....152

Clementine Helm *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden*.....152

The Poor Damsel in Distress.....160

Emmy von Rhoden *Der Trotzkopf*.....165

Henny Koch *Papas Junge*.....179

5. CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE SEVENTIES.....196

Michael Ende *Momo*.....197

Christine Nöstlinger *Konrad oder das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse*.....211

The Seventies and What Remained.....222

6. MYSTICISM AND RECONCILIATION 230

Anna Learns to Read.....231

The Maiden Without Hands.....238

Dorothee Sölle *Mystik und Widerstand*.....244

Mysticism of Childhood.....245

Roots.....261

List of Illustrations

Peter Friedel (1800): Pastell der Rahel Levin alias Friederike Varnhagen von Ense
With kind permission of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin-Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Handschriftenabteilung
Facing page 137.

Johann Heinrich Schröder (1796): Luise Kronprinzessin von Preußen mit ihrem Sohn Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm (IV.) Pastell
Crown Princess Luise of Prussia with her son Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (IV.)
["The Prussian Madonna"]
With kind permission of the Schloßmuseum Gotha
Facing page 136.

Johann Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850): Doppelstandbild der Prinzessinnen Luise und Friederike von Preußen
Double Statue of the Princesses Luise and Friederike of Prussia
With kind permission of the Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz Nationalgalerie
Facing page 134.

Josef Grassi (1758-1838): Königin Luise
Queen Luise
With kind permission of the Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg, Schloß Charlottenburg
Facing page 133.

Paolo Uccello (1397-1475): Saint George and the Dragon
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Page 164.

Photos of the "Arab Madonna"
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page 256 and 294.

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INTRODUCTION

I

> **liberate**, vt. **1a:** to give release (as from restraint or bondage): set at liberty: let loose: FREE **b** *in Hinduism and Buddhism*: to provide with salvation or grant salvation to
>
> **suppress**, vt. **1a:** to put down or out of existence by or as if by authority, force, or pressure **b:** to force into impotence or obscurity **2:** to keep from public knowledge[1]

Is it necessary to write just another book on children's literature when there are numerous critical studies and essays already in existence? Who will benefit from it – if not the author solely – and why should it be written in English by a German, and in America?

Although there are a number of valuable books on the general topic of children's literature, either in German-speaking countries or in the United States, there is no book which analyzes this literature from the view point of ***liberation, support, and suppression***. As a former teacher of literature and religious education I have a special interest in language and questions of theology. Language can be a *means of support* when it is used for claiming justice, but at the same time it can hush up facts or veil them as in the history of my own people, during the Nazi regime. Religion has been a similar tool, liberating people from slavery, as the Book of Exodus tells us, but suppressing others such as Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave. Both language and questions of theology play an important role in children's books.

[1] All definitions are taken from Webster's *Third International Dictionary of the English Usage*, unabridged (Springfield/MA: G&C Merriam, 1961).

Children's books have a great influence in educating and providing children with models for their future role as adults. Western religion has been a primary source for models. Religion was the main force in the educational program of the 19th century, since it was believed to be linked with Divine power directly. It neatly separated those in power, mainly white men, from those without power, women and children, as I will shortly demonstrate. I am interested in those persons with less power, women and children, particularly girls.

I believe that books have the power to perpetuate existing social patterns. They support the already existing class system or hierarchies: the good God, the good father, the good husband. German (Austrian, and Swiss) children's and teenage books before 1900 mostly tend to silence girls, in particular to mold them for their prospective role in society as an obedient wife and a perpetual mother. Carol Gilligan claims that "loss of voice was a symptom of loss of relationship" and continues that "Freud observed that loss of voice was the most common symptom of hysteria." [2]This was a common explanation at Freud's time for "difficult" females. For Gilligan, however, "women may hold a key to replacing violence with speaking, bringing private feuds into public places, and healing wounds which otherwise fester from generation to generation — in short, to establish democracy and civilization." [3]My aim is to give *voice* to at least some of the numerous girls and women before 1900 in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland and to bring their

[2] Carol Gilligan, "Remembering Iphigenia: Voice, Resonance, and a Talking Cure" In Edward R. Shapiro, ed., *The Inner World in the Outer World: A Psychodynamic Perspective*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997),15.

[3] Ibid., 12.

silenced voices into the "public,",since to me the idea to "establish democracy and civilization" by this act is a most fascinating one.

Moreover, to write in a language that is not my mother tongue can be like a shield. Under its cover I may observe more than in my own language and it may bring about aspects that were not hitherto known to me. The struggle to make myself understood in foreign surroundings might have its rewards in looking deeper into problems. To be away from my safe quarters can present me with a more critical eye and sometimes acts like a magic cap. I can watch, but at the same time I hide. By this I endeavor to be free from restrictions with regard to nationality or language. On the other hand I am fully aware of the fact that I belong to the privileged women of this world, since I am white and educated. Although I participated in the sufferings of Post-War Germany with its struggle for survival, I know that these needs have been brought about by my own country and were not the result of colonization, for example, as for women of color.

Description of the Project

It is a well known fact that women all over the world still have less economic and social power than men, although they represent more than half of the world's population. Within this generalization there are certainly differences in quality. For example, white educated women have more access to power than women of the so-called third world. For most nations the "question of women" (that is: lesser payment for the same kind of labor, less access to education or adequate jobs), is not even asked. How very little most people

in my country, Germany, are aware of these problems, might be illustrated by two examples. They describe the way of "solving" problems for children, girls, in particular, or dealing with the role of adult women, the former girls of the educational process. Girls and women still have a smaller voice than men in today's Germany.

The first example refers to Michael Ende's 1979 bestseller *Die unendliche Geschichte* (The Never-Ending Story):[4]

> A significant example for an escape into fantasy is Michael Ende's *The Never-Ending Story*. This ... bestseller is a cult book of adolescents and young grown ups, who partly want to compensate the *socially, politically, and economically frustrating reality*, but are looking for unconventional, creative solutions for such crises which originated in the previous plannings and strategems. But these solutions are hardly to be found in *The Never-Ending Story*, because Ende's hero Bastian ... learns through his imaginary reading adventures that he has to find himself by his own fantasy, whereas *real changes are superfluous*.[5]

The second example is taken from a Heidelberg exhibition in December 2000. The title "100 Years: Women at Heidelberg University" describes the positions women had and have in Heidelberg's university life. The exhibition notes the fact that the University of Heidelberg did not appoint its first female professor until 1959. Today, more than forty years later, there are 31 female professors, less than ten percent of all the professors, although more than fifty percent of all the students are female,[6] and Heidelberg is the oldest of all the universities in Germany. A university founded in 1386 should clearly have more than ten percent of female professors. In more than five

[4] Michael Ende, *Die unendliche Geschichte* (München: Thienemann, 1979).

[5] In Reiner Wild, ed. et al., *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* [History of German Children's and Adolescents' Literature] (Stuttgart:J.B.Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990), 358 [translation and italics mine].

hundred years there was time enough to think about a better proportion for female power and influence at this university. This example speaks for itself and calls for a more just distribution of the chances for women to participate in the upper academic positions.

Both the chosen periods of time, until 1900 and after 1968, include children's and teenager books, among them the so-called "*Backfisch-*" (the "silly female teenager") stories at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. One agenda of these stories was that children were to learn obedience and discipline. This can be seen even in small details such as table manners, where nursery rhymes showed children their precise place in society ("Kinder bei Tisch/ stumm wie ein Fisch", meaning "Children at table/ silenced like fish"). Children had to love their parents and to obey them unquestioningly. The so-called "Prussian virtues": discipline, obedience, fear of God, modesty, cleanliness, thriftiness, frugality were expected from every child. Children's stories illustrated this catalogue and were often the *means of suppression.* These "virtues" crippled children and adolescents. They took away any creativity. The bible was used as a tool of control and domestication by those who exerted power, the fathers and the husbands.

In countless stories the Swiss author Johanna Spyri (1827–1901) employs an "orphanage/homelessness"-leitmotif (*Heidi*; *Gritli's Kinder* – Gritli's Children; *Vom This, aus dem doch etwas wird* – About This, who ends up being someone nevertheless; *Rosenresli*; *Heimatlos* – Homeless). All this is combined with a special "Christian" ethic of a "good God, [under whose reign] quickly and unexpectedly sorrow may be changed

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[6] *Schwetzinger Zeitung*. 31. October 2000, 18.

into joy, just as quickly as joy may be changed to sorrow."[7] Ottilie Wildermuth (1817–77) connects the Christian aspect with a social-critical aspect in her children's stories (*Der Peterli von Emmental* – Peter from Emmental). She is the only author of those examined, who views childhood with a critical eye. Bruno Mehmke's edited stories *Christrosen* (Christmas Roses) pursue a trivial, but deeply disturbing sentimental understanding of Christianity that can culminate in a child's death as a consequence of "Christian virtues." And it is no coincidence that this child, who stands for a sacrificing act, is a girl (*Die kleine Jüngerin* – The Little Disciple). The catalogue of Prussian virtues was definitely in use until the sixties and possibly still is in use today in conservative settings. This mentality is corroborated by my personal experience, as well, and I will show its influence in the course of this thesis.

In the education of girls chastity was added to this catalogue of virtues. Chastity was not required of young men; on the contrary, they were expected to "sow their wild oats." Girls, however, had to fit into the ideas of a patriarchal marriage which was supported by religion and economy. The religious aspect from Gen. 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply," in connection with Gen. 3:16 "Your husband … shall rule over you" (possibly as a result of "women's sins") had been important for their grandmothers and mothers.

Rosemary Radford Ruether's argument to "separate between the legal and the sacramental acts of marriage to bring about its 'redemptive' aspect," [8] was certainly unheard of at those times and is hardly accepted even one hundred years later. Christian

[7] Johanna Spyri, *Gritli's Children* (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1887), 196.

marriage is still understood as the perpetuation of the old role model, where one member rules and the other one obeys. Nevertheless, it will certainly be a profound means to unburden marriage from its unholy union of being both, a sacrament and an economic relationship. Marriage still awards most of the power to the one who is earning most of the money and prevents equality between two persons who, in my eyes, should be united solely by love and respect. Until the early 1900s, the economic aspect of being provided for was based on the fact that education for women was scarce, particularly higher education. Women in Germany were not admitted to universities until 1908, fifty years after women had first been admitted to higher education in the United States. Consequently, many of the girls and women at that time had not received a formal education; they merely had access to teaching or caring professions, such as low paid employment as governesses or nurses (cf. Emmy von Rhoden, 1832–85 *Der Trotzkopf* – The Stubborn Child, vol. 2).

Before 1900, in order to instruct girls in the higher society, the *Backfisch* (the "silly teenager girl")[sic] stories played an important role. These were stories about the education of young teenager girls, comparable to the education in Swiss "Finishing Schools," some of which are still in existence today. Their aim was to teach these girls good manners, good housekeeping, a certain amount of literature; but not too much, lest they should become too learned. All these novels end up with the heroine making a suitable match, suitable from the point of view of rank, money, and influence. Having

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[8] Rosemary Radford Ruether, lecture on "Gender, Work, and Families: Ideology and Reality", Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge MA, 16 January 2001.

been given her "polish," the girl is rewarded by an appropriate husband. This, as well as the domestication of girls, the breaking of their "stubbornness", is the sole message of the *Backfisch*-Stories. Their "teenager/marriage"-leitmotif is reflected as well in Clementine Helm (1825–1869) *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden* (Silly Little Teenager Girl's Joys and Sufferings), Emmy von Rhoden (1832–1885) *Der Trotzkopf* (The Stubborn Child), Margarete Lenk *Ein Kleeblatt* (Trefoil), Henny Koch (1854–1925) *Papas Junge* (Papa's Boy). However, after 1968 most of these topics lose their importance.

I chose the date of 1968 since it is the year of the so-called Students' Movement in Germany and France. An increasing anger at morality and ethical standards brought about the formation of consciousness in the sixties that led to the students' movement in 1968. The younger generation strongly believed that the accumulation of riches could not be the sole goal in life. Since the country had lost its moral standards by systematically erasing the Jewish population, there was no "father" role model for the next generation. Thus the psychoanalyst Alexander Mitscherlich was able to speak about a "fatherless society."[9] The young generation of the sixties was interested in new ethics. Environmental damage became an issue for the first time. A new political party, the "Greens," established itself. People called undemocratic traits by their name and criticized them. For instance, the visit of the last Shah of Persia, Reza Pahlevi, whose regime was said to be undemocratic and plutocratic, led to riots in Berlin. These riots

[9] cf. Alexander Mitscherlich, *Auf dem Weg zur vaterlosen Gesellschaft. Ideen zur Sozialpsychologie* (München: Piper, 1963).

resulted in the death of the student Benno Ohnesorg and the fatal wounding of the student leader, Rudi Dutschke.

In addition, many of the younger students strongly objected to the Vietnam War, a war which destroyed the reputation of the United States in Germany. Until then the United States had been held up by many as a model of democracy. The straw that broke the camel's back, however, was the emergency legislation in Germany, which gave government far too great an increase of power. Student demonstrations started all over the country. There were daily sit-ins among pupils and students.[10] When I myself tried to organize a sit-in just to discuss the background with my High School pupils (grades 9–12), it nearly cost me my first job, because all the teachers involved were being reported to the Board of Education. If my headmaster at the time had reported me, I would have never got a job as a teacher again, since most of the teachers in Germany have the status of civil servants. Sit-ins were considered inimical acts against government and a breach of the civil servants' oath to observe the German Constitution.

After 1968 children's and teenagers' literature changed. In one of his essays, Jack Zipes, then professor of German at the University of Florida, expressed this change in the title he chooses: "Down with Heidi, Down with Struwwelpeter, Three Cheers for the Revolution. Towards a New Socialist Children's Literature in West Germany."[11] Although the portrayal of women and girls in books published after 1968 clearly

[10] In German terminology, the term "pupil" is being used to designate students in primary and secondary education, whereas "student" refers to those in higher education.

changed, young women still had to fit into certain clichés. Women's possible ideas of relationship (and, since gay or lesbian relationships were treated as practically non-existent, this concerned merely "straight" relationships) were dominated by male "revolutionary" ideas, for example "Wer zweimal mit derselben pennt, gehört schon zum Establishment" – (He who sleeps with the same woman twice, has become established). This was the time when unmarried men and women shared apartments, to the horror of their parents. But in most cases it did not mean sharing everyday household work. It was the women who generally had to clean the apartment or do the laundry. However, these years were the beginning of shared parenthood: children were brought up in so-called "Kinderläden" (a form of daycare center, where children were educated according to the ideas of Alexander S. Neill's "Summerhill School" in Great Britain). These children grew up with next to no restraints, which can be illustrated by the apocryphal remark of a child: "Do we have to do what *we* want again?"[12] 'Anti-authority' was the keyword of the day.

There were new topics and new questions for children's and teenager literature. The Austrian author Christine Nöstlinger wrote about (anti-authoritarian) rebellious little teenager girls and boys (*Konrad, das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse* – Konrad, the child from the can); about Nazi times (*Wir pfeifen auf den Gurkenkönig* – We don't give a damn about the Gherkin-King), a book which, at that time, was almost breaking a taboo; or Judith Kerr's *Als Hitler das rosa Kaninchen stahl* (When Hitler stole the pink rabbit).

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[11] Jack Zipes, "Down with Heidi, Down with Struwwelpeter, Three Cheers for the Revolution. Towards a New Socialist Children's Literature in West Germany," in *Children's Literature* 5 (1976), 162-179.

Authors of children's books began to write about disabled children, who had previously been neglected, such as, Peter Härtling's *Das war der Hirbel* (This was Hirbel). There are books about environmental damage: Jürgen Müller *Alle Jahre wieder saust der Preßlufthammer nieder* (Year after year the pneumatic drill hits the ground), a topic with which no one had dealt before, or books about children of the so-called third world and their deprivation: Gudrun Pausewang *Die Not der Familie Caldera* (The misery of the Caldera family). Until the late fifties children were not only given the idea that their parents were ideal, but that the world in which they lived was also perfect. Some books are even programmatic in their title, for instance *Das Nein-Buch für Kinder* (The Book Saying "No" For Children). However, as I have shown before, the period also fosters escape from unsolved problems into fantasy.

But this project has its limitations. First of all, my thesis does not include the time from 1900 to 1968. I do not address the Weimar period, Nazi period, and post-war period in Germany. Secondly, I leave out the development of children's books in the former GDR since this aspect would be another topic.

Quite a number of books analyze children's books of the Nazi period. The post-war period in general re-introduced reprints of those books before 1900, since they were supposed to be "safe"; that is, without Nazi ideas and therefore approved of by the three Western allies America, France, and Great Britain. After 1945 not a single book in Germany could be printed without the consent of the allies. However, even contemporary

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[12] A quotation generally known by teachers of that time.

books translated into German, such as those of the Norwegian author Berte Bratt in the 1950s, gave a very similar message, as did the reprints. Her advice to young women was to get married, have children, attend university, if you must, but be prepared to pay a high price – that is to stay unmarried. If you choose jobs, let it be "female" ones such as typists, milliners, cooks, or – if an academic – women medical doctors or teachers.

All of these ideas can be found in Nazi times, too, although I do not wish to accuse Ms. Bratt of developing Nazi ideas. In Nazi times hardly any woman was allowed to attend a university. Joseph Goebbels, Secretary for Propaganda, described this restricted role of women succinctly: "A woman has the task to be beautiful and bear children."[13] What a difficult life for all those who were not beautiful, were not interested in men, and were not able to bear children! When in the course of World War II women had to step in for the men at the front line in order to maintain the economy, they took subordinate jobs, unless they worked for the Nazi party. The Nazi party gave young women from socially lower classes the ambiguous opportunity to work in jobs as guards in concentration camps. These were mostly intelligent young women with next to no education who loved to exert power, as is shown in an interesting study on *Opfer und Täterinnen* (Victims and Perpetrators).[14]

The Soviets had another way: Their aim was the elimination of all "bourgeois" and "decadent" traits. So they forbade all the reprints of the time before 1900. It is

[13] Joseph Goebbels, cited in: Elisabeth-von-Thadden-Schule, *Widerstand wider Willen* (Heidelberg: Selbstverlag, 1994), 47.

[14] Angelika Ebbinghaus, ed., *Opfer und Täterinnen. Frauenbiographien des Nationalsozialismus.* Schriften der Hamburger Stiftung für Sozialgeschichte des 20. Jahrhunderts (Nördlingen: Greno, 1987).

interesting that after the GDR collapsed in 1990, all these books (for example *Der Trotzkopf* – The Stubborn Child) were reprinted and became bestsellers in those states formerly making up the GDR

Prospective Readers

I feel indebted to the generation of my grandmothers and my mother who helped us children to pull through in post-war Germany. They belonged to the generation of the so-called "Trümmerfrauen" – debris women – who had suffered from two world wars, had supported building up Germany again and, lamentably, were excluded from the affluent society that they had helped to establish. Although they were strong during war and post-war times, their voices were silenced by those men who returned from captivity.

By writing on women and children and, among them, girls in particular, I intend to reclaim their voices and image by showing how they have been misused and stylized to fit into the existing model of education prior to 1900. This model definitely played an important role in post-war Germany until the late sixties and has influenced the lives of numerous girls and women.

I write for my former pupils, since they seem to be heading towards the old patriarchal system once again. One reason for this development may be the fact that there is a high unemployment rate in Germany (10% in general, up to 20% in the new Eastern States). Men are preferred as "breadwinners" again. Women have to content themselves

with part-time jobs. Since the "women's question" (that is, low wages for women, preference of men when applying for a job) does not exist in the eyes of officials, it has not been dealt with. Households, where both partners have a full-time job are sneeringly declassified as "Doppelverdiener" – double earners – a nonsense in itself, since none of them has a "double" income.

I write for my own generation in particular, whom the journalist Sabine Bode has described as "unauffällig" –*inconspicuous*:

> A generation that was never asked about their needs, remains dumb and inconspicuous, taking comfort from the thought that others suffered even greater hardships. While the grown ups … accused all and sundry – be they those left in the rubble, refugees, widows, injured, POWs – their children were told, 'Be glad that you've survived. Forget all. Look ahead!' This did indeed happen.[15]

This early conditioning is certainly one of the reasons why a number of my generation, and among them particularly women, never questioned, never showed rebellion; why we simply accepted what was said about us, or what we were told to do. On the other hand, I also strongly believe that another strand that made women "inconspicuous" can be found in their early education, and there in the way society was portrayed for young children and teenagers through the medium of children's books. I can clearly trace it in my own socialization. At the same time my studies in psychology and history at the university enabled me to achieve a different point of view and to question what I saw.

My Social Location

I was brought up in a very conservative middle-class family, where men were blatantly given preferential treatment. Nobody ever even discussed it. Indeed, my grandmother taught me that "Women always take the road of subordination," but luckily she did not live in this way. Only when I became an adolescent did I start thinking about the discrepancy I noticed: a number of my women friends trained for a job, but only war widows actually worked for a living. The idea was to get a job "in order to have something to fall back on." Still, girls of my age were taught that it was much better to marry. Society pitied those women who had to work in order to make a living. The idea that any of them could love her work or would wish to work for her own money, her own freedom, was immediately ridiculed.

I soon realized that only religion was the domain of women. On Sundays it was they who attended church (taking into account the fact that many men had been killed in the war). But women never played a leading role in the church as an institution. In winter, my grandfather, head of a small village school, regularly preached Sunday sermons when the rector of the parish was not able to plow through the masses of snow with his horse and carriage. My grandmother on my mother's side, a deeply religious woman, would have been far better suited, but as a woman she was not allowed to preach. Only since the 1970s have women priests ministered in Evangelical churches in Germany, and in some

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15 *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12/13 February 2000 – *South German Newspaper*, [translation mine].

states, for example in Bavaria, the male incumbent had to be asked for his consent as late as the 1990s.

At the age of ten I was sent to a boys' High School, because it was a two-hundred-year old venerable institution which both my father and uncle had attended, also. We were 13 girls among 450 boys, and the teachers were all male except for the gyms'- and needlework teacher. I was the only girl in a class of 30 and soon learned what it was to be "only" a girl. Most teachers were convinced that girls were unable to grasp a sensible thought, and that they certainly were not gifted at all. The only exception was my music teacher. He even trusted me to be capable to sing the role of Agatha in Carl Maria von Weber's *Freischütz,* and he was the only one who was genuinely sorry when I left that institution.

The lasting impression I drew from my childhood was first of all that women are not as talented as men; secondly, that they are weak and, finally, that women do not attain important positions in life in general, (and in business-life in particular). For all these reasons women needed to marry. To achieve this, their main goal in life, they must never ever show that they might have any intelligence of their own.

When I went to university, the situation did not differ very much from my experiences at school. In the 1960s only five percent of staff members were women professors, a number which has not changed dramatically until the present. Currently approximately ten percent of the professors at German universities are women. Sexual harassment was not mentioned then either. I still remember with shame and fury that a

professor, whose course I had attended, answered my request to have an end-of-term-examination by his playing footsie. Faithful to the motto "It's only the woman's fault if a situation like this occurs," I tried to leave the room as soon as I feasibly could. Only the fact that I met a woman friend who noticed my state and asked "Did he play footsie with you, too?" helped me to cope with this awkward situation. In her final exams, the same woman was greeted by a renowned male professor with the words: "Another woman! That's just like the church!" By this he clearly protested against the overwhelming number of females he had to examine.

I realize that my personal experiences don't necessarily hold true for all my female contemporaries. Nevertheless, I have found that a large number of them tell similar stories. What is the reason that large parts of a whole generation of women in Germany share these experiences?

Many of those close to me shared a similar background: all of us had first-hand experience of the World War II, and suffered from its consequences. Many had either lost their home, or had been expelled from their native regions as refugees. Many of us had lost either father, uncle or other loved ones in the war. Our financial background was a unifying feature, too. None of us had money, many of us were malnourished, in particular those who were refugees. All of us were familiar with the experience that we had to "function" in crisis situations, that to show emotions was a sign of extravagance. When three-year olds are trained not to take their teddy bears into the shelter but rather a rucksack with their personal documents, this fact speaks for itself.

Another trait which had a deep impact on me is the history of the German people some fifty years ago. When I found out what German Nazis had done to their own people, the German Jews, and other Jews, I was deeply horrified, but could not speak to anybody about it. This was another similarity existent in many German families: very few of the adults cared to speak about what had happened during the War. This could often have been due to shame, to guilt, to the feeling that they had failed to regard their neighbors' needs or because they wanted to establish the idea for their children that (at least from the day of the German surrender) the world was whole and good. This wall of silence strictly separated children and adults. Children were expected to control their emotions or better still, not to display any at all. So many of us did not dare to speak about our vastly disturbing emotions in the time of puberty. Many of us were actually denied our puberty. Most parents were overwrought because of the needs of daily life, so they did not want to deal with the fact that their girls and boys were on the way to becoming adolescents. There was no one with whom you could discuss the feelings of belonging to a people that had turned into monsters. I still remember very clearly my emotions when I was on my first school exchange trip to the Netherlands, or later to France and Great Britain. I was deeply afraid that I might have been recognized as a German and would have to face the guilt of my people. I did not dare – until today – to speak about the emotions of someone who feels that he/she was/is always "on the wrong side." When I came to Great Britain for a longer time, I deeply envied the British for their unbroken attitude towards their nation, although I was certainly not a representative of chauvinism. Whilst I am here in the United States, I experience the same ambivalence.

To belong to a nation you can be proud of because of its struggle for justice, freedom, and welfare for all, such as, for example Sweden, is something deeply unknown to me.

The experience of my childhood, adolescence, and adulthood was one of *exclusion*: I was excluded as a child in my school time because of my gender, I was excluded from belonging to the "right people" in my time of adolescence and adulthood because of the guilt of my people. But perhaps it is this position of an outsider, which enables me to look more strongly and feel more deeply when things are not what they should be.

Why I Wrote as I Wrote

Why do we tell stories? Some people tell stories to entertain. They themselves are in the limelight for a moment. Others tell stories to certain ends. They want us to be compassionate and give for the poor or feel sportive and buy a new, more powerful car. Some want us to join a party or another religion. Mothers and fathers tell stories to calm down their children, put them to sleep. But some tell stories so that their children and grandchildren will be familiar with the family's or the tribe's roots.

My story telling is much linked with the latter form. My family comes from Lower Saxony in Germany, from the Weserbergland, that landscape where the brothers Grimm collected their fairy tales. Those were told on the estates along the river Weser and quite a number of them have a common European background. Jack Zipes emphasizes that "contrary to popular belief, the Grimms did not collect their tales by

visiting peasants in the countryside …Most of the storytellers .. were educated young women from the middle class or aristocracy."[16]

In my family story telling played an important role. My grandmother read biblical stories or fairy tales to me and my siblings, my mother chose books she thought to be suitable for adolescents, suitable from the point of view of making us familiar with the hardships of Christian missionary activities or naturalists like Amalie Dietrich (1821-1891). I loved the fairy tales better. I loved the spirit of unruliness and freedom they conveyed and the idea that human beings, animals, plants, and stones could share one common language sometimes. As a little girl I was convinced that one day I should be able to understand the language of snowdrops, since I was born on a Sunday, and Sunday children understood the language of plants, so the adults had told me. So I stooped as a three year old girl in order to hear the snowdrops jingle and so understand them (the German word for Snowdrop *Schneeglöckchen* means *Little Snowbell*). It did not occur to me that the adults might have reported me wrong. I simply believed that I had to grow up just a bit more.

Meanwhile I gathered a circle of listeners myself to whom I told fairy tales as soon as I had learned to read. Story telling soon became an *act of liberation*, because I had been transformed into a very shy child whose first acquisition was the art of making herself "invisible." I spent hours on our huge Yew trees or the attic, the only places where I could escape the adults and their sheer endless demands. By telling stories I found the means to become active and *express myself*. This was the only time when *I* could choose

[16] Jack Zipes, trans., *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, vol. I (New York: Bantam,

and act according to my own wishes, because *I* chose the story. In this group I could find some sort of *solidarity*, however restricted and fragile, which otherwise I did not have. My father had made me skip third grade. So I was a stranger to the new classmates. The same happened when I was instructed for my confirmation which I had to undergo at the age of thirteen, whereas all the others were fourteen years old. Here again I was a stranger and even had to go by train to our small district town since the superintendent himself was in charge of it (to make sure that I really had the required "maturity"). He was a hard man who did not seem to love children but delighted in creating an atmosphere of anxiety and inferiority. So again it was best not to be seen. At that time we had to pass an examination before the whole congregation and here again my joy for story telling helped me overcome my shyness. I distinctly remember telling the congregation the parable of the *Good Samaritan* (Luke 10: 29-37) without a faltering voice (which I often had).

So story telling helped me to step out of my "invisibility" and got me some sort of solidarity with others. When today I recollect *what* stories I told, all of them seem to be strangely linked together. They were Hans Christian Andersen's tale of the *Ugly Duckling*, his tale of the *Little Mermaid*, Grimm's *The Frog Prince Or the Iron Heinrich*, and Wilhelm Hauff's *Caliph Stork*. Andersen tells us the story of a little swan that was brought up in a family of ducks, was supposed to be ugly and clumsy according to "duck standard," just as I felt clumsy and ugly when I started attending the High School for boys as an only girl. The *Little Mermaid* describes the next step: As she loves the human

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1987) xviii.

prince, she "sells" her voice in order to become human and be able to walk. Similarly I had lost my voice long ago, although to no prince. The only exception was my singing in the school choir. The *Frog Prince Or the Iron Heinrich* was not important to me because of the prince's transformation into a human being but because of the figure of the faithful Heinrich. In him I could and can see myself, a person who has been taught to be faithful – as I will show in the fairy tale of the *Maiden Without Hands* – but who has to get rid of the "band around my heart"[17] in order to be truly free. *Caliph Stork* marks a stage where I yearned for redemption. Like the caliph who was transformed into a stork because he had lost the word that would bring him back to his full human self, I longed for finding a key for transformation. *Mutabor*, the Latin *I shall become transformed*, marked the beginning of a search which has not yet ended.

So the act of story telling liberated me personally to rediscover and reclaim parts of what I believe to be my true self. It got me some sort of solidarity with others. The Grimm's fairy tales, however, connected me with my own *roots*, the landscape I come from and its people, my ancestors. Not only the *act* of story telling became important to me, the *stories themselves* included elements of what I felt in those days and even today.

For my thesis again I chose the act of story telling, this time from the point of view of an adult woman. When I started this process, I thought I would do it for *my own generation* solely, that *inconspicuous society* to which I already referred to in my opening chapter. Little did I know at that time how much my writing was connected with my own

[17] Ibid., 4.

biography. Again and again my advisor and supervisor told me to use the word "I" (which I had hidden behind "you" or "one" to make sure that they did not include anything personal) or start using the active voice. "Unleash your voice," a workshop at the Episcopal Divinity School about voice and body showed me how much I kept back, and the difficult process of decoding my own messages, sometimes even hidden to myself, started.

Superficially looked at, I could explain my decision of contrasting children's and adolescents' books from the 19th century and those from the seventies by the fact that I had inherited all my 19th century's books from my grandmother and had bought those from the seventies when my own children were small. They were there, so why not use them? But was that really so?

I had read *Heidi* again and again as a child and later on, had felt raptures about her recovery, her going home to the mountains after Frankfurt, but at the same time experienced an emptiness when reading about what I shall call "the missionary child" part. The same refers to *Gritli's Kinder*. Elsli had found a new home in that story, yes, but still she had to die because her story perhaps was a vehicle to transport Spyri's own grief about her only child's death. [18]

I was horrified by little Marie's fate, the girl who wanted to be "like Jesus." When I first read her story, I was of a similar age. Would I like to be like Jesus and become burned? No, I definitely did not want that fate but that was contrary to my Sunday school's education. "Ich bin klein/ mein Herz mach rein/ soll niemand drin wohnen/ als

Jesus allein" (I am small/ purify my heart/ nobody shall dwell in it/ but Jesus alone), so I prayed at night. Why could not Jesus share my heart with my beloved grandmother? One of the songs I had learned at Sunday school concerning the discipleship of Jesus equally irritated, scared, and haunted me for a long time: "So nimm denn meine Hände/ und führe mich/ bis an mein selig Ende/ und ewiglich/ ich mag allein nicht gehen,/ nicht einen Schritt ....Laß ruhn zu deinen Füßen/ dein armes Kind;/ es will die Augen schließen/ und glauben blind"[19] (So take my hands/ and guide me/ until my blessed ending/ and perpetually/ I don't want to go on my own/, not a single step ...Let rest at your feet/ your poor child/; it wants to close its eyes/ and blindly believe). I could not understand why I should be unable to walk on my own and combined it with the line : "Let rest at your feet your poor child; it wants to close its eyes and believe blind." For me this meant that I had to become *blind* literally in order to follow Christ (why was the child called "poor" if not for its blindness?) and that therefore Jesus had to guide me. The horrifying stories in *Christrosen* convinced me that my explanation was true and it took me a long time to find out the real intention of that song. So *Christrosen* struck another autobiographical note.

The *Silly Teenagers' Stories* were linked with my social education. Although written nearly three quarters of a century earlier than my own adolescence they still comprised traces of my own upbringing, like the importance of marrying at all costs, of finding a "suitable" husband, from the right social background. Similar to the importance of giving up my "I" for Jesus to guide me, the secular "I" with its own wishes and needs must be given up for a husband and his well-being.

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[18] I am indebted for this thought to a conversation with Dr. Verena Rutschmann, Schweizerisches

All my life I had been taught to be a good daughter, sister, wife, mother, but never ever to be I *myself*. I had to cross the Atlantic, the "mighty waters" I shall speak about later on, in order to find myself. So the choice of the books I explore in this thesis is one deeply linked with my own biography.

On the other hand I do want to *give voice* to the *inconspicuous society*, I want to bring "private feuds into public places" as Carol Gilligan describes it, because "to establish democracy and civilization" has become the most important task in this world to my belief. We are private and social beings. I myself had great hopes in Germany's Students' Movement of 1968. The two stories I chose for the seventies, *Momo*, the child who could not be corrupted, and *Konrad*, the child who had to accept change in order to remain true to himself, include this message of liberating authenticity. It is probably no coincidence that I chose a girl and a boy as representatives, because I still believe that this world can find its balance only when both genders work together and give up competition, rivalry, and power constructs.

So the choice of my books mirrors my autobiography and my hope. But as so much in these stories is linked with the fate of others and as I myself am a social being as well, my writing comprises more. By finding out about the motives and intentions of the selected stories I want to put them into the larger picture of the modeling and educating of girls and young women in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Each story has a message of its own. Some messages can be seen as encouraging models (*Peterli; Konrad*), some of them are deeply disturbing (*Die kleine Jüngerin*).

Jugendbuch Institut, Zürich.

Liberation takes place where the intentions of these stories can be revealed, where their ethic values can be laid bare as a power construct which in reality wants to enslave. For me the act of disclosure is the most important first step that can lead to liberation. A human being who sees through the intentions of groups, of single persons, of messages has more freedom in choosing or acting.

Another purpose I can see is that the telling of stories about ourselves helps us not only to understand ourselves better but others as well. Someone who honors me by sharing her/his story with me will not wage war against me. So Liv Ullmann is right: "We have to overcome boundaries, not with a gun in our hand, but by telling stories." This is the noblest reason for story telling.

Are the chosen stories a means of liberation and support or of suppression?

Rhetorical Models and Methodology

In the conference on *Religion and the Feminist Movement* [20] which assembled about 300 women, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza stated that the Doctor of Ministry program at the Episcopal Divinity School, Cambridge, MA had been established for women's education. As I have participated in this program, I benefit from what feminists of former times did, and I acknowledge this fact in deep gratitude. Therefore it will not come as a surprise that feminist writing will be my main source in establishing rhetorical models and their methodology.

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[19] Text: Julie von Hausmann (1825-1901).

In the *Wörterbuch der feministischen Theologie*[21] (*Dictionary of Feminist Theology*) Nicole P. Zunhammer defines *hermeneutics* as the "science which deals with the exegesis and interpretation of scripts, texts, statements, and facts. At the base of this science is the fact that there is a tension of space and time between the draft of a text and the interpreter/interpretess, which on top of that will be complicated by a different horizon of understanding."[22] So there cannot be science pure or science verified, whenever and wherever language is dealt with.

For Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza "Feminist hermeneutics (from Greek hermeneuō, "to interpret") is best defined as theory, art, and praxis of interpretation in the interest of wo/men (women and men). While wo/men of faith always have interpreted the scriptures, feminist hermeneutics is a newcomer in theology… feminist hermeneutics attempts to reconceptualize the act of interpretation as a moment in the struggle for wo/men's liberation."[23] So *feminist* hermeneutics adds another element: the struggle for liberation for women and men. It does not work with those methods developed by centuries of male interpretation only, but proudly uses those instruments that until now have been belittled as the "feminine touch," meaning the use of the right half of the brain as well. To Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza "[a] critical feminist hermeneutics of liberation utilizes not only historical-, literary-, and ideology-critical evaluative methods…[i]t also

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20 November 1-3, 2002. Women's Studies in Religion Program. Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge/MA.

21 Elisabeth Gössmann,ed., et al. *Wörterbuch der feministischen Theologie* (Gütersloh: Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1991).

22 Ibid., 183 [translation mine].

23 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Feminist Hermeneutics" in Letty Russell and Shannon Clarkson, ed., et al., *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 99.

employs methods of *storytelling*, bibliodrama, poetry, *painting*, dance, music, and ritual for creating a "different" religious imagination."[24]

I will use all of the "four rhetorical strategies of analysis: suspicion, reconstruction, evaluation, and imagination"[25] in my thesis.

In her essay on "Methodologies" Rebecca Chopp underlines that "Feminist theological methodologies" share the method of a "pragmatic critical theory," which she defines as a "theory that is historically and socially contextual. It does not attempt to make universal arguments or constructs that will hold for all times and places." For her the "critical theory us[es] the symbols, images, and concepts involved in that situation."[26]

But feminist interpretation (and particularly that of theology) does not end up by using intellect and imagination. Hong Kong born feminist theologian Kwok Pui-Lan tells us that "Asian women theologians begin to use their indigenous symbols, legends, and rituals in their theologies…[They] have used the myths, legends, and cultural resources from Asia to reappropriate biblical stories."[27] This "reappropriation" has led to a fascinating and highly encouraging shift in the interpretation of Mary, for example, who is "redeemed .. from a docile, sanctified, and gentle mother to a self-defining woman … She accepts the challenge of the Holy Spirit and acts as redeemer for human salvation. For Asian women, Mary symbolizes a woman who yearns for liberation of the oppressed

24 Ibid., 100 [italics mine].
25 Ibid., 100.
26 Rebecca Chopp, "Methodologies" in Russel, *Dictionary*, 181.
27 Kwok Pui-Lan, "Feminist Theologies, Asian" in Russel, *Dictionary*, 101.

people."[28] Here again the tools for Asian feminist theologies are "music, poetry, dance, drama, and storytelling,"[29],and again they enable liberation and renewal.

Feminist methodologies root themselves in women's *experiences* which Ada María Isasi-Díaz describes as the "locus and source of women's liberation theologies," and she underlines: "[b]ecause ultimately feminist theologies are about liberation of all women, it is precisely liberation understood in a holistic sense – that is, liberation at the structural as well as at the personal level, at the ideological level .. as well as at the historical level – that offers the basis for determining whose experience to privilege: those of women who benefit the least in a material, psychological, or religious sense."[30] Feminist liberation theologies are based upon the experiences of many women. Therefore at their best they offer no domination of one group, race, social background about the other. They comprise diversities or – as Isasi-Díaz puts it: "Privileging the experiences of others means that *differences have to be understood, valued, and embraced* in such a way as to lead to engagement and interaction."[31] So women's experiences have to end in action and not to be content with passive reception. The topic of my thesis, *Storytelling - An Act of Liberation* is based on women's experiences, the stories many of them have told, including my own story.

Mitzi N. Eilts defines *story* as "the articulation of one's experience in verbal narrative … in song, poetry, fiction, (auto)biography, liturgy, and sacred texts… stories are the fabric of the chronicles of history and the essence of religious sacred writings:

28 Ibid., 102.
29 Ibid., 102.
30 Ada María Isasi-Días, "Experiences" in Russel, *Dictionary*, 96.
31 Ibid., 96.

narratives of human experience in shaping reality. The hearing, telling, naming, and inclusion of women's stories is necessary to doing our theology… Finding one's *voice* and speaking/hearing the stories of others whose existence has been silenced… they are considered the key to moral agency, key to full participation in society and history."[32]

At the conference for *Religion and the Feminist Movement* as many as 300 women and a few men listened to the different *stories* of women from all kinds of background and cultural contexts, listened to their *experiences,* woundings, which sometimes caused anger and wrath, but very often mourning, and the craving for justice. But as I noticed, nearly all of these women excelled in a perfect sense of humor. None of them gave the impression of defeat, however deep the wounds may have been. It was this struggle for justice going on despite age and injuries that impressed me most.

Stories have to be told in a uniting language. In her book *Und ist noch nicht erschienen, was wir sein werden. Stationen feministischer Theologie*. (*And what we will be has not yet been revealed. Stages of Feminist Theology*) the German feminist theologian Dorothee Sölle entitles one of the paragraphs in the chapter *Wer bin ich (Who am I*)? *Die neue Sprache suchen (Looking for the new language*). Here she speaks about her experiences as a student of theology herself: "This academization of theology, in addition mostly combined with male display behavior, admits thinking only in determined terminologies and excludes by a prescribed degree of abstraction that which [existentially] is ontologically moving. Through this abstractness, however, it hides its

32 Mitzi N. Eilts, "Story" in Russel, *Dictionary*, 278 [italics mine].

own political functions. For me this was something from which I suffered much. Concretization, incarnation, that is to say substantiality will be avoided in this abstract realm of thoughts."[33] Quite a number of women, including myself, have met with this sort of language which excludes spontaneity, imagination, creativity, and leads to dissatisfaction and sometimes emptiness. Sölle continues: "Male theology, meaning that institutionalized theology which in a long process has strongly disclaimed the female parts of the soul, is a theology of the head which presents itself in ready-made sentences, in condensates from experience therefore. Female for me would be to ask: Which *experiences* are behind it actually? What has brought you there?"[34] Sölle emphasizes the fact that human beings today have given up communication. So for her "*religion* is one of the great *language*s of *humankind*."[35] Quite a number of the stories told in my thesis deal with religion. But often their language and understanding is used as a means of *suppression*. So the new language still has to be found.

This new language has to be based on the experience of many of us and it has to include all parts of us, so it must not split into brain versus heart. Both of them are needed, neither is superior.

The philosopher Hans Georg Gadamer, compatriot and fellow citizen of Heidelberg (until his death in 2002), wrote about the use of language: "We regard our task as rather that of deriving our understanding of the text from the linguistic usage of the time of the author. The question is, of course, to what extent this general requirement

[33] Dorothee Sölle, *Und ist noch nicht erschienen, was wir sein werden. Stationen feministischer Theologie* (Stuttgart: Kreuzverlag, 1987), 155f. [translation mine].
[34] Ibid., 159 [translation mine].
[35] Ibid., 159.[translation mine].

can be fulfilled. In the field of semantics, in particular, we are confronted with the problem of the unconscious nature of our own use of language."[36] For Gadamer it is necessary to get back to a "historical horizon": "The task of historical understanding . involves acquiring the particular historical horizon, so that what we are seeking to understand can be seen in its true dimensions."[37] This is what a number of feminist theologians tried to do, for example Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza in her book *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origins*.[38] In a way I try to follow a similar path when I reconstruct the origins of German tract stories or attempt to find traces of a common moral understanding throughout the Europe of the 19th century, rooting themselves on the same interpretation of religion. Gadamer looks at the "process of understanding …as a real fusing of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung)*, which means that as the historical horizon is projected, it is simultaneously removed."[39]

By using the tool of a hermeneutic circle (*hermeneutischer Zirkel*) Gadamer emphasizes: "A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings (*Vor-Meinungen)* that are not borne out by the things themselves… Thus it is quite right for the interpreter not to approach the text directly, relying solely on the fore-meaning at once available to him, but rather to examine explicitly the legitimacy, i.e. the

[36] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Originally published as *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1960). The translation was edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming (New York: Seabury Press, 1975).

[37] Ibid., 270.

[38] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Reconstruction of Christian Origin* (New York: Crossroad, 1994).

[39] Hans Georg Gadamer, 273. Original text, 289.

origin and validity, of the fore-meanings present within him."[40] Exactly this method, the hermeneutics of suspicion, is employed by various feminist theologian writers.

Like the spectator in a Greek drama, the interpreter has to become part of the text, has to belong to it (*Zugehörigkeit*), and at the same time has to remain distant: "[W]e spoke of the way in which the interpreter *belongs* to his text and described the close relationship between tradition and history that is expressed in the concept of effective-historical consciousness."[41] For Gadamer "[t]he significance of the hermeneutical experience is rather that, in contrast with all other experience of the world, language opens up a completely new dimension, the profound dimension whence tradition comes down to those now living. This has always been the true essence of hearing, even before the invention of writing, that *the hearer may listen to the legends, the myths and the truth of the ancients*."[42] This exactly is also part of feminist theological writing which involves not only writing but listening to the voices of the past and the present, thus opening up completely new dimensions.

The German sociologist Jürgen Habermas chooses the topic of myth in order to exemplify the "claim to *universality* with our *Occidental understanding of the world*."[43] He continues: "In archaic societies myths fulfill the unifying function of world-views in an exemplary way – they permeate life-practice. At the same time, within the cultural traditions accessible to us, they present the sharpest contrast to the understanding of the world dominant in modern societies… With respect to the conditions for a rational

40 Ibid., 237. Original text. Ibid. 252.
41 Ibid., 416. Original text. Ibid. 434 [italics mine].
42 Ibid., 420. Original text. Ibid. 438 [italics mine].

conduct of life in this sense, they present an antithesis to the modern understanding of the world." Habermas sees the end of this development in a *devaluation*: "A devaluation of the explanatory and justificatory potentials of entire traditions took place in the great civilizations with the dissolution of mythological-narrative figures of thought, in modern age with the dissolution of religious, cosmological, and metaphysical figures of thought."[44] This goes hand in hand with the attempt of getting away from the body, with the neglect of its needs, with the building up of the structural and structured as a counterweight against the "chaos" of creativity and spontaneity. It is the struggle of rigidity versus abundance and ends up in the "lovelessness of the objectified cosmos" ([Max] Weber, [1864-1920, German sociologist and political economist]).[45]

To Habermas it is "[t]he Protestant ethic…[which] fulfills necessary conditions for the emergence of a motivational basis for purposive-rational action in the sphere of social labor. With the value-rational anchoring of purposive-rational action orientations, it satisfied … only the *starting* conditions of capitalist society; it gets capitalism underway, without, however, being able to secure the conditions for its own realization."[46]

For me the question arises whether the construct *Protestant ethics* leading to some sort of *capitalism* is not connected with that male-centered rationality Dorothee Sölle speaks about. In his chapter on *Reconstruction and Interpretation in the Social Sciences*

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43 Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society* Trans. by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press. 1983), 44 [author's italics].

44 Ibid., 68.

45 Ibid., 203-242.

46 Ibid., 228.

Habermas speaks about l*anguage* [47] "Hermeneutic watches language at work, so to speak, language as it is used by participants to reach a common *understanding* or a shared *view*. The visual metaphor of an observer who *looks on*, however, should not obscure the fact that language in its performative use is embedded in relationships."[48] In Sölle's description of the theologian academic language used in her time as a student, there was neither *understanding*, nor a shared *view*. There was the power differential between those in command of a dominating language, designed and dictated by men, and those left out, if they did not choose to adapt (which in reality was no genuine choice at all, since no alternative language was accepted). In fact, "to participate in some … communicative action in the course of which the sentence in question is used in such a way that it is intelligible to speakers, hearers, and bystanders belonging to the same speech community"[49] did not take place, because the persons involved did not belong to the "*same speech community*." According to Habermas, language serves three functions: "(a) that of *reproducing culture* and keeping traditions alive (this is the perspective from which Gadamer developed his philosophical hermeneutics), (b) that of social integration or the coordination of the plans of different actors in social interaction …, and (c) that of socialization or the *cultural interpretation* of *needs*."[50] The writing of feminist theology tries to fulfill all these elements, thus trying to establish a *speech community* of equals. So there is the aim of democratizing language in order to make it intelligible which distinguishes feminist theological writing from the average academic writing. Whether

[47] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. by Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).
[48] Ibid., 25 [author's italics].
[49] Ibid., 23f.

this goal can always be realized is another question. In my thesis I employ these means exactly, because giving and receiving *voice* can only work on the base of equality.

Habermas does not only stress *philosophical* and *sociological* aspects, but uses those from *psychology* as well. He emphasizes that Freud's attempts on self-reflection "could credibly claim legitimation as a scientific procedure in a rigorous sense."[51] For Habermas "psychoanalysis joins hermeneutics with operations that genuinely seemed to be reserved to the natural sciences" and continues: "Freud always patterned the interpretation of dreams after the *hermeneutical* model of philological research. Occasionally he compared it to the *translation* of a foreign author … It was no accident that Dilthey [52] took *biography* as the starting point of his analysis. The *reconstruction* of the structure of a *life history* that can be remembered is the model for the *interpretation* of *symbolic structures* in general."[53]

So writing and psychoanalysis share the same elements. They have to do with language, with symbols, and its interpretations. But "the technique of dream interpretation goes beyond the art of hermeneutics insofar as it must grasp not only the meaning of a possibly distorted text, but the meaning of the distortion itself."[54]

In all persons affected, these distortions were established at a very early stage, in the age of *childhood.* These children's personal rights for well-being and development have been grossly neglected or violated, depending on the degree of abuse. In the 19th

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50 Ibid., 25 [italics mine, brackets by the author].

51 Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. by Jeremy Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 214.

52 Wilhelm Dilthey, 1833-1911, German philosopher.

53 Habermas, *Knowledge…*, 214f. [italics mine].

54 Ibid., 220.

century children, particularly girls and/or young women, were supposed to look out for the welfare of others. But this was not limited to the females of the 19th century only, as I am going to prove. The Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller writes that

> [i]t took decades for me to recognize cruelty for what it is, to write about it and not let my newly gained awareness be undermined by the pressure of society. Society chooses to disregard the mistreatment of children, judging it to be altogether normal because it is so common … I have come to understand that the brunt of society's ignorance is borne by former children who, like me, were intimidated by their parents so forcefully, so skillfully, and above all at such an early age that even as adults they are still under the sway of this treatment and try to make excuses for it.[55]

As Freud came across children's and young women's abuse by society so did Miller. This is what Miller found out about society's reaction: "As I began to shift from writing *about* children to lending children themselves a voice, I encountered .. [society's] hostility directly. Prominent periodicals, for instance, eager for me to submit an article, lost all interest when I informed them I would write about family violence."[56] But Miller did not yield to society's pressure as did Freud but went on writing about families, their hidden cruelties, and the importance of an "understanding witness," meaning a person who would attest towards the child the evil that had been done. How important this testimony of evil is we can see in South Africa's process of repairing the victims' dignity before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

But Miller saw and sees the political dimensions in the upbringing of those children as well. Broken children will continue to break others when they themselves are adults. She saw them in Nazi Germany, and concludes: "If battered children such as

[55] Alice Miller, *Pictures of a Childhood*, trans. by Hildegarde Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1986), 10.
[56] Ibid., 18.

Hitler, Eichmann, Höss, etc., have been able to destroy human life on the monumental scale history clearly indicates they did, then it is only logical to ask how beneficial an influence children who are not battered or abused can have on the world when they grow up." For her "[t]hose who need not fear the truth about themselves, who have not felt (or no longer feel) compelled to protect their parents by means of self-deception, will not ward off the truth about others or deny others' suffering." [57] Feminist theological writing wants to give *voice* to those who have been silenced for their own sake, for society's sake.

In her essay "Writing Cultures, Enculturating Writing at Two Theological Schools: Mapping Rhetorics of Correlation and Liberation," Lucretia Yaghjian, Director of the WRITE Program at the Episcopal Divinity School and the Weston Jesuit School of Theology, develops four movements in the *rhetoric of liberation*, taught at EDS.[58] The first movement, *writing stories*, comprises "hearing, or writing of stories, one's own and those of others" as I have done in this thesis. The second movement foots on *interrogating and analyzing stories* and circumscribes my questions of what is *liberating*, what is *supporting*, and what is *suppressing* in the analyzed stories. The third movement has the title *writing rites*. Here my autobiographical story about Anna, who learns how to read and write, my *Missing Link* story, fits in. The fourth movement, *rewriting tradition*, comprises the writing of my own experiences in connection with Dorothee Sölle's *Childhood Mysticism*. Yaghjian stresses: "Moreover, claiming the authority to rewrite the

[57] Ibid., 27.

[58] Lucretia B. Yaghjian, "Writing Cultures, Enculturating Writing at Two Theological Schools: Mapping Rhetorics of Correlation and Liberation," *Teaching Theology and Religion*, 5,3 (July 2002), 135ff.

tradition is intimately connected with the gift of claiming one's own writing/speaking voice rather than assuming a more detached, dispassionate academic persona in the writing of theological papers."[59]

I claim my *own writing voice* in the process of this thesis. And I can even offer the "initiatory dream" Lucretia Yaghjian speaks about.[60] Since my father's death in 1982 I dreamt the same dream again and again for years, with only slight variations. I dreamt that suddenly I found rooms which belonged to me and which I had never entered, since I had forgotten their existence. These rooms could be everywhere, from the attic to the basement. I analyzed that these rooms were calls to be creative, either by painting or by writing. The dreams stopped in the year when I finished my thesis.

But I had another dream in the process of writing about *rhetorical models and methodology*. I dreamed that I went to university in my present days: There I accidentally meet an acquaintance, very elegantly dressed, who overtakes the long line of applicants and meets someone, apparently belonging to the higher ranks of academia. As she is allowed to pass immediately – which I notice with envy – I decide to follow her but ask her: "How many are waiting still?" She answers: "Nobody is in front of us." We both go along when suddenly a man appears with rectangular sunglasses. Both, my acquaintance and I, wear sunglasses as well. I notice that the man carries a machine gun with which he shoots a woman. My acquaintance is untouched but I am horrified, take down my sunglasses, and ask him why he did it. He laughs and explains that this is his job. Then he

[59] Ibid., 136f.
[60] Ibid., 137.

shows me photos; it is always the same picture: a woman, completely wrapped in gauze, lies on a bed in a bent position. She always appears in white.

Then the scene changes, and we are in a sort of canteen. The food that is served is all in red. I choose red beans. My acquaintance heaps two huge pieces of red meat on my plate, without being asked. I tell her: "No, I don't want that. This is the meat of society." I put it back again and awake.

My interpretation of this dream is the following: The acquaintance in my dream is a highly educated woman, wife of a theologian, who strongly prefers intellect to emotion. When I once told her about an experience I had with God, her answer was: "Make sure that you don't end up with fundamentalism." Her full integration into the academic world of my dream is proved by the fact that she did not have to wait like all the rest.

The diary – or better "nocturnal" in which I keep writing my most important dreams – speaks about the painting of impotence as early as 1994. There I painted a woman in the shape of a mummy, wrapped in gray layers of gauze with inscriptions on them like "Always be honest until your cool grave." The woman was crowned with a garland, ending in silver funeral bows. In the background silver pine trees à la Böcklin's Island of the Dead [61] rose. On top of the women silver clouds sailed, the clouds of illusions. In 2001 in Cambridge/MA I painted a series of five pictures for my sermon on Genesis 3. There again I painted a woman wrapped in gauze. This time the mull wore inscriptions of theological statements like "Mulier taceat in ecclesia" – woman is to keep

[61] Arnold Böcklin, 1827 – 1901, Swiss painter.

silent in church – or "woman, vessel of all evil," in short, all those biases by which women were silenced.

The man with the rectangular sunglasses is a representative of a male (academic?) society which "kills" women. By taking down my own sunglasses I start to see the world as it really is and at the same time claim to be different from that society I belonged to so far. Sun glasses are imperative requisites of the "Fit for Fun"-society I am going to write about. By asking the gunman about his motives for his senseless murder, I overcome my anxiety to be shot as well. I risk to inquire after the truth. This truth is simple and trivial: "It's my job." So this man – like many other men before and after him – has/ have murdered and will kill again, but not men. Women only are his/their target/s.

The canteen-scene underlines the new process of understanding. I refuse "the meat of society," I do not want to incorporate (in the literal sense) this "gift" of society. It is "red" meat, bleeding(?) meat, acquired by injustice and the death of fellow creatures at large. On the other hand I am fully aware that I need and depend on society's "gifts" such as "kindness," "support" and in a wider sense that of "education" altogether. The dream only marked the fact that I am no longer willing in taking (a) *all* of society's gifts and (b) to accept them uncritically. This is a genuine dream of liberation, of feminist liberation, analyzed with the means of feminist liberation theology.

Survey and General Outlook

I begin my circle of writing and interpreting with a sermon I wrote on Genesis 3, the fall of Adam and Eve. This is a story of etiology, a narration which has been designed

to explain a certain states of affairs: here the expulsion from paradise. But it is more. For me it is a story of a lost partnership which includes "the Spirit of yearning for mutuality", meaning "to cultivate a more truly mutual relation."[62] Even if a balanced relationship between human beings never existed, this story might be read as a craving for its being so.

An Eve looking for knowledge and deciding independently had to be chastised. The fact that it was she who took the initiative and could even convince her husband must have been seen as something exceedingly dangerous in a patriarchal society. What evil could happen if this was to become the raw model for other women? What would this mean to a relationship of men and women, no longer defined by hierarchy? But worse, this portrait of an unequal partnership became the raw model for many marriages in which "he shall rule over [her]" (Gen. 3:16), thus strengthening patriarchy, hierarchy, and enabling the loss of identity in the women concerned. On the other hand this became the model for the respective children of these marriages. Boys started despising their mothers because this was often the way they saw their fathers treat their wives. Girls learned that males counted more than females. So Genesis 3 was not only the beginning of the end of a (perhaps) partnership of equals, it was perpetuated in the innumerable generations to follow, all claiming that it was God's will, because it was written in the bible. In the history of suitable prototypes for the educating and modeling of girls even Mary in the Second Testament proved not to be the adequate model. Although Mary was equally self-

[62] Carter Heyward, *Saving Jesus from Those Who Are Right: Rethinking What It Means to Be Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), xiv.

determined as Eve, she was not admitted as a prototype for women and girls, either. Mary had to become the hermaphrodite construct of an eternal virgin and at the same time, mother. Her own rebellious traits which are still to be seen in the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46-55) were wiped off. Her courage to say "yes" to the message of an unknown, unfamiliar envoy from a celestial realm was transformed into an act of exemplary and everlasting obedience. The overcoming of her own fears at a stage and age where most young women still need guidance and her acting free and authentic was not mentioned, because a woman with a mind of her own was and is still seen as something dangerous.

The narration of the lost partnership is followed by the stories about the lost parents. Both, *Gritli's Kinder* and *Heidi* deal with orphaned children. *Gritli's Kinder* show children on earth which to Spyri's belief are better kept in heaven. I demonstrate that contents and language are full of clichés, that the ideals of "God" and "heaven" are untrustworthy. The children's problems remain unsolved, they are without *voice*, a mere foil. The message that girls cannot act authentically is delivered in *Gritli's Kinder*. Elsli, the substitute child for the deceased Nora, has no choice of her own. As a poor half orphan she has to be grateful to be taken into a rich house. When she supports the family of the poor fisherman by her own choice, she is guilt-ridden, because she acts on her own (a girl should always ask for permission). The question of her own social background (being the daughter of a poor day laborer and being exploited after her mother's death, simply because there was nobody else to do the work which had to be done in order to survive as a family) is not solved by transferring her to a rich house in a foreign country.

Elsli never acts for her own good, she probably does not know herself at all. So the message is deeply disturbing and definitely not liberating for the upbringing of girls who read about her fate.

The "classic" *Heidi*, which in part I (*Heidis Lehr- und Wanderjahre*) has a liberating aspect in those passages where Spyri depicts the consoling and healing "landscapes of the soul," deals with the education and socialization of girls. It teaches its readers, mainly female, that girls and women in particular have to submit their own wishes to those of others or, worse, not even think about wishes and needs for themselves. The religious trait emphasizes the role of what I call the *missionary child* or adolescent. This comprises the second part of *Heidi*: *Heidi kann brauchen, was es gelernt hat.* A possible biblical background of this topic may be 2 Kings 5:1-5, the narration of Naaman and the nameless Hebrew slave girl. Where in 2 Kings 5 this young woman can play a positive role by delivering the message that someone of power and might in this world like the general Naaman can be liberated if he listens to the least powerful, the Hebrew captive, and the whole power construct is turned upside down, the "missionary" Heidi does not have a choice of her own. She is caught in the net of a woman-to-be without education and provision. She will be provided for in the end in exchange for her company. Both her grandfather and the doctor from Frankfurt rely on Heidi to nurse them in their old age.

How important the topic of performing missionary activities on children and turning them into missionaries themselves was for the 19th century will be seen by

looking at Hesba Stretton and the Tract Society, followed by German tracts (*Christrosen*).

The German tract story of *Die kleine Jüngerin* who wanted "to be like Jesus" and got burned to death shows both the threatening and the crippling results of such an education for women and girls. Marie cannot follow her own inner voice because it had been crippled and silenced right from the beginning. Her social circumstances and the fact that she is a girl teach her obedience and self sacrifice until death. The minute lapses into anger are wiped off immediately by the question: What would Jesus have done in this situation? And this Jesus is certainly not the one who scolded his mother (John 2:4) or the one who expelled the merchants and money changers from the temple (Mark 11:15), but a meek and mild construct whose fellowship means death but not liberation. Little Marie's story was used to convince other children (most of them girls probably) of the discipleship of Jesus and transformed them into little missionaries themselves.

Ottilie Wildermuth is shown as a positive example for a religious story without transferring children into missionaries. The novel encourages young persons to seek their own ways even if their social backgrounds are miserable. In the end Peterli *will* become a doctor for medicine, Mareile *will* find a home where she is loved and cherished. So poverty must not be a drawback. All this is embedded into a deep faith in a just God.

The 19th century models for girls and young women are portrayed in *Eros and*

Sexuality in 19th Century Germany and the *Silly Teenagers' Stories*. My narration of the *Damsel in Distress* shows the limitation and dangers of this sort of education. The message of the *Silly Teenagers' Stories* is not grounded in civil religion any longer as were the Spyri novels, the tract narratives, and Wildermuth's novel. Their topic is marriage and to a certain degree sexuality. It is the same 'revised' sexuality that turned Mary into the everlasting virgin and changed the act of making love into an act of 'pollution'. So the fact that Jesus has brothers and sisters (Mark 6:3) had to be silenced shamefully (because those could have only been fruits of 'pollution' since Joseph was a human being). The *Silly Teenagers' Stories* depict love as a chaste affair where all passion has been wiped off. The future husband seizes the father's role, only that with this 'father' the young women share their beds. The sometimes tinge of incest which can be found in some of these stories is transferred to the safe father-husband-figure. Again these stories have a crippling effect on adolescent girls and young women. They tell them that marriage is a goal that has to be achieved by all means and at all costs. The message is that young women are unable to live on and for themselves. And with regard to their bodies, their desires and needs have to be tamed and they are definitely not asked to seek their own pleasure, but solely that of their partners.

Children's and adolescents' literature after 1968 will look into *Momo* and *Konrad, das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse*, both taken from the seventies. It will contain a deeper look into what has changed, what has remained, seen from a today's point of view. What is liberating in the children's books of the seventies? *Konrad, das Kind aus*

der Konservenbüchse rebukes a crippling education which turns children into perfect little adults. The child Konrad who was trained to perfection is changed into a normal child. Kitty, the little girl who helps him, is a cunning and bright creature who belies her parents if *she* decides it is to the best of all of them. The singles Berti Bartolotti and Herr Egon change from figures at the brink of ridicule to true parents and probably a different personal relationship. The gray couple who wanted to have a perfect child has to be content with a dog in the end. So this story is truly liberating.

Momo has elements that are freeing: a *girl*, who inspires creativity, truth, courage, a girl who *acts*. But its message is too closely linked with the old pictures of a pure and innocent female. Momo is of uncertain age as well as of uncertain sex. All her actions are righteous, she never says a wrong word, but she does not give the impression that she is human. In a way she again is the virgin put on her old pedestal.

Dorothee Sölle's chapter on *Childhood Mysticism* is to conclude these notes and at the same time it is meant as a warning, not to forget about our own dreams, our inner growth, our souls in order to function in a world for which dreams and inner growth have become increasingly troublesome and annoying as they are not predictable, as they are not linked with this world's topic number one of how to make money, the most money. On the other hand only our inner growing makes sure that we act as human beings in the

true meaning of the adjective "human," that is to respect each other, share with each other, defend each other's rights and liberty, in short, to give others *voice*.

Storytelling as an act of enabling individual liberty only is not enough. It has to be followed by the *action* of giving voice to the other. Storytelling is linked with the act of listening to ourselves *and* the voices of others. It has to do with accepting our own neediness. It has to do with giving up roles we played, masks we wore throughout the whole life until we took them for our own faces. It has to do with finding ourselves in what we do through the grace of God. It has to do with liberation for you and me.

II

GENESIS 3, SERMON

fall, n: **2c**: lapse or departure from innocence or goodness: spiritual ruin <~ from virtue> - used with *the* and often cap. In reference to the fall of man [sic!] reported in Gen. 3(2)

exegesis, n [NL, fr. Gk *exēgēsis*, fr. *exēgeisthai* to explain, interpret, fr. *Ex* out of, out + *hēgeisthai* to lead...]: EXPOSITION, EXPLANATION; esp: critical interpretation of a text or portion of Scripture

My cycle of *storytelling* starts with a narration that was probably written down more than three thousand years ago, but was told in tents and clay brick huts far earlier. It is the story of the fall. To me it reveals the origin of an unequal partnership, the origin of patriarchy. It marks the beginning of women's so-called inferiority to men which made the excuse of abusing women all over the world, whether the abusers be Christians or not. As Kwok Pui-Lan showed in her paper presented at the AAR in Toronto on "*Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Early Christianity*": "...the issues of women's position in early Christianity...are not simply feminist concerns, but have significant implications for a postcolonial reading of the New Testament." They have to be seen in "relation of anthropology to colonialism and its representation of the Other."[1] Anthropological and colonial prejudices have been transported all over the world. This certainly will hold true not only for the Second Testament, but for the First as well.

This etiology narrative tries to explain and justify the unjust treatment of women. I contrast it with another model, which explains the "necessity" of the fall, as Eve finds

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[1] Kwok Pui-Lan, "Feminism, Postcolonialism, and Early Christianity" Unpublished paper presented at the AAR Toronto, NT Studies and Postcolonial Studies Consultation, 24 November 2002.

her counter in Mary, Queen of Heaven, and a better model for human relationships, based on a Grimm's fairy tale.

Sermon on Genesis 3

I can fairly claim for myself that I am more familiar with sin – and death as its result – than resurrection and love. So it is no coincidence that I have two memos like beacons hanging over my desk. One of them is a quotation by bell hooks, saying

"How can we speak of change, of hope, and love when we court death?"

The other one is by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza:

"The goal of Wisdom teaching is to enable us to cope with life."

Below these citations is the pencil drawing of a guardian angel, given to me by my four-year-old friend Franziska. This angel gracefully turns his head full of flaming yellow hair to the left, a movement which is very similar to that of the Christ of Andrej Rubljev's icon of Trinity. Franziska is a child full of curiosity, temperament, and endless "Why"-questions. She loves to explore on her own, and "I'll do it myself" was her key sentence last year. Her parents support her craving for independence, but protect her from real danger. To explore, to be curious, seems to be part of human nature. Does it really? Let us see, what the biblical Story of Gen. 3, named as the narrative of the Fall, tells us about it:

Genesis 3

1. Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" 2. The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; 3. but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle

of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" 4. But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; 5. for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."6. So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. 7. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

8. They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden at the time of the evening breeze, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" 10. He said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." 11. He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" 12. The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit from the tree, and I ate." 13. Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent tricked me, and I ate." 14 The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you among all animals and among all wild creatures; upon your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." 16. To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." 17. And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. 19. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

20. The man named his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living. 21 And the LORD God made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them.[2]

This chapter proves that apparently we cannot take it for granted that human curiosity and the wish to *know* will be accepted, not to speak of rewarded. God, depicted in anthropomorphous language as a father, is angry about Eve's curiosity. The text tells us that apparently he gave strict orders, regulating the life of Adam and Eve: "You shall

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[2] All bible citations are from *Holy Bible*: *New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die," (Gen.3:3) so Eve reports to the Serpent.

Gen. 2:9 has already informed us that God had put *two* trees in the center of the garden: "the tree of life … and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

All the fairy tales tell us that a forbidden room is the most interesting of all, even if there be others to be explored as well. Grimm's tale of the Virgin Mary's Child speaks about the forbidden room with "the Holy Trinity sitting in fire and splendor."[3] Or the story of Bluebeard, where the prohibited chamber reveals all the mutilated women, Bluebeard had put to death.[4] But still, both women in the tales are determined to unlock the forbidden doors.

In Gen. 3 it is a tree which is so much a taboo that Eve thinks she may not even *touch* it. The explanation given is that "you shall die." But what does this threat mean to someone who never experienced death?

Verse 22 reveals the true background and importance of one of the trees:

> "Then the Lord God said, "See, *the man has become like one of us* …and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the *tree of life*, and eat and *live forever*."

So this prohibited tree, the center of the garden, is the tree of life, giver of eternal life. Did God then speak the untruth, when he told Eve and Adam "You shall die?"

Eve, the curious, active person, receives her information about the tree by the Serpent, which "was more crafty than the other wild animal that the Lord God had made"



(Gen. 3:1). Now, "crafty" is an ambiguous word. One of its meanings can be "someone who is skillful, clever," its second meaning is "cunning, sly, tricky."

Both, the Serpent and Eve, are God's creation. The difference between them is that "God created human kind in his image" (Gen. 1:27). Does not God want his creatures to be clever and active? What kind of relationship is depicted in Genesis 3?

We learn that God walks "in the garden at the time of the evening breeze" (Gen. 3:8) like a landowner of that time. Although he expels Eve and Adam from the garden of Eden, God "made garments of skins for the man and for his wife, and clothed them" (Gen. 3:20). By doing so he acts like a good house father. But this is only one side of the coin. The good father of this narrative looks after his children. These children are naked and do not know the difference between good and evil. They live in a secluded garden in a sort of symbiotic way as babies live together with their mothers during the first months of their lives. Eve's transgression enabled them to be separate beings, to be able to decide for themselves about good and evil, to leave the stage of childhood. In this story of development a woman plays the active role: "she took the fruit and ate"(Gen. 3:6). Although Adam is present during the whole dialogue with the Serpent ("her husband, who was with her," Gen. 3:6), he did not show any activity. It is Eve, who "gave some [of the fruit] to her husband and he ate"(Gen. 3:6). Eve chooses knowledge, chooses to know about "good and evil" (Gen.3:5).

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[3] *The Complete Fairy Tales of the* Brothers *Grimm*, trans. by Jack Zipes (New York: Bantam, 1988), vol.1, 8.

[4] Ibid., vol. 2, 325.


SIN
DEATH
SOR
MULIER
GREY
IN
ECCLESIA
VESSEL OF EVIL
SUBMISSION

But Eve's activity causes an enormous punishment. From now on the roles are exchanged: "Your husband … shall *rule* over you" (Gen. 3:16). Her only activity in future will be to give birth. But even that is spoilt: "I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children" (Gen. 3:16). Eve is now a reduced person: passive, waiting for the man who "shall rule over" her. The former state of equality and partnership has gone forever. From now on woman is man's property, cursed because of her curiosity, enlarged, and at the same time reduced, to an eternal seductress, the vessel of all evil, a person, who freely may be punished, because God himself had punished her.

Adam is cursed, too. But his curse does not touch the relationship with the woman at his side. The ground he will have to work on is cursed because of him, and his toiling on it will be difficult. But in his relationship to Eve, he takes over the authority. For both of them death will be the end: "you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Gen. 3:19). God had spoken the truth about the tree of life, although an ambiguous truth. So this text is a true text of terror. It is a text about broken relationships.

God ended the relationship with "his children," because they were no longer the children he wanted them to be and because they might become like him. Why then did God create them in his image? Eve's understandable curiosity was the end for a partnership of equals, because God's curse enabled patriarchy, hierarchy, and contempt for women. From now on there is no genuine model for a true partnership for the following generations. Adam becomes whitewashed "soon." 1Tim. 2:14 makes it quite clear: "Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a

transgressor." This text does not grant her a name even. The results are known: "Let a woman learn in *silence* with full *submission*. I permit no woman to teach or have authority over a man; she is to keep silent" (1Tim. 2:11f.). Not only had Eve been made passive, no, she had to lose her voice altogether: "she is to keep silent." This has been the proto-model for *all* relationships, where power is exerted, may they be straight, gay, or lesbian. Mistrust, rivalry, competition are its result, and some of them end up in bitter hatred. On the altar of this "authority" women have been burnt at stakes, have been raped, have been battered.

A jealous God, who expels his beautiful creation because of her curiosity and craving for knowledge, the jealous God, whose curse for Eve finished any relationship between equals – is this the end? Do we have to perpetuate and repeat this curse from generation to generation as psychology teaches us?

After I had written the first part of this sermon, I wandered around for weeks. I did not intend to harmonize what could not be harmonized. But I knew that this jealous God had nothing to do with me or I with him. My confirmation text spoke of a different God: "God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them" (1John 4:16).

When I was on the lookout for possible models of life, I found two models. On one of them I came across in an Evensong in the British Cambridge. As an apple addict my heart was delighted about this discovery:

> Adam lay ybounden
> Bounden in a bond,
> Four thousand winter
> Thought he not too long.

And all was for an apple
An apple that he took,
As clerkes finden
Written in their book.

Ne had the apple taken been
The apple taken been,
Ne had never our Lady
A been heavene queen.

Blessed be the time
The apple taken was,
Therefore we moun singen
DEO GRATIAS![5]

What astonished me, was the experience that there was not a single word about the seductress Eve which in fact Gen. 3 does not speak about, either, if we let alone that Adam later justifies his transgression by telling God that "the woman …gave me fruit from the tree" (Gen. 3:12). But later times clearly turned her into the eternal temptress, as we saw by the Timothy letter. The text from the 15th century plainly speaks about *Adam* having taken the apple. It mentions punishment, as well: "Adam lay ybounden," but this was for a forseeable time, not for ever. And, above all, Adam could agree to this punishment: "Four thousand winter/ Thought he not too long." But then the apple, the symbol for sin and death, gets transformed. This apple, this malum, evil, enabled our Lady, Mary, to become the Queen of Heavens. That view includes Christ's birth, death, and resurrection, although it does not mention them with a single sentence. It is about the unspeakable, about God's unfathomable love for his humankind. So words are not deep enough to express what has to be said, and therefore silence is far more impressive. The

[5] Anonymous, 15th century.

text ends with the blessing of what once had been a curse, therefore we are all invited to join in the Deo gratias. This is my "celestial" model, so to speak.

But I was still looking for a mundane model, a model that enables equal partnership. I found it in my own roots, in one of my beloved Grimm's fairy tales which have been collected from where I come, the Weserbergland. I found it in a tale with the title "The White *Snake*."[6] It is the old story of the proud princess who does not want to marry the man beneath her rank. So he has to undergo trials, and although he passes them all, the princess still is not satisfied. She sends him to fetch an *apple* from the *Tree of Life*. I will read the end of the fairy tale to you:

> Now the young man was full of joy and started on his way home. He brought the golden apple to the beautiful princess, who no longer had any excuses to make. They *divided* the apple of life and *ate it together*, and her heart filled with *love* for him. In time they reached a *ripe* old age in *peace and happiness*.[7]

This text gives us all ingredients for a successful relationship, may it be lesbian, straight, or gay: to *divide* and *eat together*, meaning to share each other and whatever gifts we have. The result will be *love* and the process of *maturity*, and, if God permits, *peace* and *happiness*. The gifts of God for the people of God. This will be bliss, 'eden, indeed.

Amen.

What is behind this deeply troubling narration about the broken relationship of a woman and a man and their relationship to God? What have "clerkes …[w]ritten in their book[s]" about it? How do theologians interpret this text?

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6 The similarity of *snake* and *serpent* in this title struck me.

7 Ibid., vol. 1, 75


b.

Exegetical Comments

In this exegetical reflection I am going to look at commentaries with a particular feminist approach. I myself shall use the "hermeneutics of critical evaluation" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza).

In contrast to most standard commentaries, the feminist commentaries on Genesis 2 - 3 underline the change of relationships divine and human (Carol Meyers).

In Gen.1:26-29 both man and woman are created at the same time, and both are created in God's image. The result is equality between the two. Phyllis Trible refers to the fact: "clearly, 'male and female' correspond structurally to 'the image of God,' and this formal parallelism indicates a semantic correspondence."[8] So there is not only equality between the sexes but a profound relatedness to their divine opposite. Therefore Phyllis Trible concludes that "the parallelism between…'male and female' shows further that sexual differentiation does not mean hierarchy but rather equality…Neither has power over the other."[9]

Text J declares Adam to be taken from the earth (ʾadāmā), whereas Eve is made from the human being Adam. Hildegard von Bingen interprets this as an act of

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8 Phyllis Trible, *God and The Rhetoric of Sexuality* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978), 17.

9 Ibid., 18.

superiority: being "flesh from flesh" already, Eve need not be transformed as was Adam (caro enim de carne, in aliud non mutanda permansit).[10]

Caryl Johnston thinks of Adam's creation in J as "the unfolding of his skeleton. Our word 'articulation', reflects this, because it refers not only to the distinct vocal sounds of speech but also to the formation and distinction of the bone and skeletal system."[11] And she goes on interpreting the creation of woman as a possibility for Adam "to translate experience and fact into symbol. But how can he have access to his own within-ness? The female lives there. The female must emerge into the flesh …, leaving that 'within-ness' open for human cognitive activity."[12]

Carol Meyers stresses the fact, that in Genesis 2:24 the "conjugal bond is given priority. Only in marriage are male and female complementary parts of the whole, for the parent-child relationship is an intrinsically hierarchical one in a way that the wife-husband one is not."[13] What has altered their relationship is human guilt. "Neither God nor the woman has tempted the man, and yet he implicates them both in his guilt. He indicates that Eros, which he himself once celebrated ... is a mistake."[14]

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10 *De operatione Dei* 3.7 [*PL* 197: 963], quotation from Elisabeth Gössmann, "History of Biblical Interpretation by European Women," in *Searching the Scriptures*, vol. 1, ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Herder,1997), 29.

11 Caryl Johnston, *Consecrated Venom: The Serpent and the Tree of Knowledge* (Edinburgh: Floris, 2000), 59.

12 Ibid., 60.

13 Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 86.

14 Trible, 119.

In Genesis 2 we learn that God brings the newly created animals "to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name."(Gen. 2:19) Von Rad refers to this naming as "both an act of copying and an act of appropriative ordering, by which man intellectually objectifies the creatures for himself."[15] So the act of naming can be seen as an act of taking into possession. When for example Jacob wrestles with the divine apparition, Jacob asked for his name: "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" (Gen. 32:29) and does not give his name. To have the name is to take into possession, as we know from fairy tales, where Rumpelstiltskin's power is broken by the fact that his name is publicly known. So Adam's naming "his wife Eve, because she was the mother of all living" (Gen. 3:20) is to be seen in a similar light. Phyllis Trible interprets it so, when she says "this language…chillingly echoes the vocabulary of dominion over the animals… Now, ...the man reduces the woman to the status of an animal by calling her a name. The act itself faults the man for corrupting one flesh of equality, for asserting power over the woman, and for violating the companion corresponding to him."[16]

Adam gives his wife a name that reduces her to one function solely, the "mother of all living." Phyllis Trible quite clearly underlines this, saying: "What alone might be a title of honor, 'mother of all living,' is in context intertwined with a position of inferiority and subordination."[17]

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15 Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, 1961), 81.
16 Trible, 133.
17 Trible, 134.

Rosemary Radford Ruether compares the narrative of Genesis 3 with the Greek author Hesiod's Golden Age Myth. There Zeus sends Pandora with a box of troubles to humankind. Pandora opens the box and is now made responsible for all evil in the world:

"Both of these stories are shaped by males to blame women, especially as wives, for all the troubles of hard labor and physical illness. Both of them imagine the idyllic time as one prior to hunting, agriculture, and technology, a gatherer paradise when humans could simply stretch forth their hand to pluck the fruits of an abundant earth."[18]

One of the commentators which does not give the impression of a *sinning* Eve who thus destroyed an everlasting life in paradise is Susan Niditch in the *Women's Bible Commentary*. It sees "Woman [as] the one who will house life within her, helps to generate this new, active, challenging life beyond Eden."[19]

This commentary draws a positive image of the serpent, as well: "The snake, like the Greek giant Prometheus, who was said to have given fire to humankind, is a trickster... The trickster has less power than the great gods but enough mischief and nerve to shake up the cosmos and alter it forever. ...She [Eve] is no easy prey for a seducing demon, but a conscious actor choosing knowledge. Together with the snake, she is a bringer of culture."[20]

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[18] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992), 144.

[19] Susan Niditch, "Genesis," in *Women's Bible Commentary* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1992), 17.

In the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* Lee Palmer Wandel explains the craving for asceticism in the Middle Ages: "Eve was seduced by her desire to know; the most immediate consequence of the first couples' disobedience was their unease with nakedness. In the Middle Ages, Christ's celibacy and Mary's virginity were more than a sign of their holiness; their sexual asceticism was essential to the story of human redemption."[21]

As we know, this aspect plays an important role even today, particularly for girls, whose virginity is their most highly valued "possession." In Latin America this tradition is called "*marianismo*, which is based on the worship of the Virgin Mary. This tradition holds that women are morally and spiritually superior to men and thus creates exacting standards of behavior for girls and women to emulate. Associated with *marianismo* are the values of *decente*, referring to virtuous and proper behavior, and *verguenza*, referring to modesty or embarrassment about the female body and the notion that girls should not know about sexuality."[22]

So women even today have to pay a high price in order to cope with their societies' ideals. There is still the distinction between the dominating male and a sexually subdued female, although *marianismo* gives the woman a sort of "compensation" by telling her that she is "morally superior." But this will not help her in a world where male

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20 Ibid., 17.

21 Lee Palmer Wandel, "Fall," in Letty M. Russel & J. Shannon Clarkson, ed., *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* (Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 97.

dominance is a fact and is to be seen everywhere. When Rosemary Radford Ruether writes about the German feminist theologian Dorothee Sölle, she emphasizes that "because women as a gender group have been marginalized …and have been socialized to identify more with love and relationality, Sölle hopes that women will be readier to break with lies and power systems and align themselves with the struggle for justice and love. The struggle is finally one of women and men for life on earth, not a struggle of women against men. The good news of the gospel, rescued from patriarchal distortion, is that God in Christ is with us and in us in this struggle."[23]

To my belief this can be the only model if we hope to have any future on this earth, whatsoever. The "fall," which in its essence was an act against authority, comprises both, man and woman. So Dorothee Sölle, summarized by Rosemary Radford Ruether, can stress: "The primal sin of Adam (more, specifically, of Eve) was disobedience to authority, to be atoned for by redoubled submission. Christians are taught not to question authority to discern whether it is of God."[24] If we do not find ways of questioning every sort of authority and finding out whether they are life establishing or life destroying, we cannot continue living.

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[22] Jill McLean Taylor, Carol Gilligan, Amy S. Sullivan, *Between Voice and Silence: Women and Girls, Race and Relationship* (Cambridge, MA/ London, England: Harvard University Press, 1997), 61.

[23] Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women and Redemption: A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 189 f.

[24] Dorothee Sölle, *Creative Disobedience* (Cleveland: Pilgrim, 1995), 7 – 22, cited after Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Women And Redemption. A Theological History* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 336.

This questioning of authority, may it be that of a "good God," the actions of a "father in heaven" as well as that of a father on earth, will be my aim in the examination of Johanna Spyri's novels *Gritlis Kinder* and *Heidi*.

III

THE MISSIONARY CHILD

tract, n [ME *tracte*, irreg. Fr. L *tractatus* action of handling, discussion, treatise…]:
2a: pamphlet, leaflet, or folder issued (as by a political or religious group) for propaganda; esp: one containing a religious exhortation, a doctrinal discussion, or a proselytizing appeal

missionary, n, **1b**: one who undertakes a special religious or humanitarian mission among those of his own faith or country, **c**: one who attempts to convert others to a specific way of life, set of ideas, or course of action

Johanna Spyri: *Gritli's Kinder* and *Heidi*

From the broken partnership of the first couple to the children and adolescents of the 19th century is a great leap, covering millenia. Is the God of the fall seen as the same in Spyri's novels? In order to find out about this I intend to analyze the Swiss Johanna Spyri's novel *Gritli's Kinder (Gritli's Children)* from the point of view of "heaven" and the "good God" by using a literary critical method and comparing them to biblical texts. *Gritli's Kinder* will be examined from the point of view of "heaven" and the "good God" and will be explored in the context of the *Book of Revelation* and *Job* because of the fruitful biblical analogies. I will argue that contents and language in *Gritli's Kinder* are full of clichés and stereotypes and that the ideals of "God" and "heaven" are deeply untrustworthy. The solving of problems for the children mentioned consists of escapism, not confrontation. Spyri thinks it better for ten year olds to be in heaven than to be supported on earth.

Whereas Spyri's story, *Gritli's Kinder*, which is announced by herself as a story "For Children and for Those who Love Children" in reality is a "text of terror," this is different, with regard to *Heidi* which has other options. My aim is to find out about the

difference. So in a second analysis I try to apply the same method I will use in *Gritli's Kinder* on Johanna Spyri's *Heidi.* Again I will employ the topic of "God," but contrary to *Gritli's Kinder* I will use the topic "nature" as another category and consider the topics "education" and "psychology" as well. "God" and "nature" are linked theologically through the act of creation, and "education" in the fear of God was so important for the 19th century in German speaking countries that Heinrich Hoffmann's (1809-1894) *Struwwelpeter (Slovenly Peter)* became *the* book to put pressure upon children and make them afraid of the consequences of their action.[1]

In a third part I want to find out why, in particular, *Heidi* became and still is such an enormous success. There are *Heidi* films, beginning with Shirley Temple as Heidi, and continuing to this day in the latest American *Heidi* film in 1995 and a European production for the 100th anniversary day of Spyri's death in 2001. There are *Heidi* cartoon films which every child in Europe of a certain age has watched. So I want to find out about the reason for this enormous success, and suggest some elements that have contributed to its status as a children's classic.

A fourth part will deal with the question of what station of life Spyri herself was in and how much it influenced her writing. What might have caused the change of perspective from *Gritli's Kinder* to *Heidi*?

A fifth part will employ the question of "agency" or children and adolescents seen as "missionaries," and connect it with a biblical "model," the little handmaiden, a captive

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[1] In his opening lecture for the exhibition *Struwwelpeter international* in Heidelberg's University Museum (16.05.-04.07.02) the great expert for children's literature in Germany, Prof. Dr. Klaus Doderer emphasized the fact that *Struwwelpeter* was in itself a political-satirical piece of work, not designed to educate children in particular.

from Israel, who served Naaman's, (the commander's of the Aramean army) wife (2 Kings 5:1-5). This exiled girl helped Naaman to be healed from leprosy as Heidi will be the means for Klara to be healed in Heidi's "exile" in Frankfurt. I will compare and contrast these two texts in order to find out about their similarities.

I will then look into one of the origins of religious tract narratives for children and adolescents and introduce a) the British Hesba Stretton; b) look into Spyri's first novel *A Sheet on Vrony's Grave*; c) analyze children's and adolescents' religious literature in Germany (Ottilie Wildermuth; I shall contrast her narrative *Der Peterli von Emmental* to *Heidi*); d) discuss my own grandmother Georgine Lückhoff as a product of a similar education. Then I shall analyze the German tract novel *Die kleine Jüngerin* and show the dangerous message emanating from this type of religious literature.

Gritli's Kinder

My edition of this book, translated into English, is beautifully produced, edited by Cupples and Hurd in the 19th century. It bears the former owner's name and the date "Christmas 1887" and tells the reader that this is "A Story for Children and Those who Love Children." The book starts with the description of an obvious idyllic scene:

> The golden sunshine of a glorious June morning flooded the roses of the beautiful garden that surrounded a handsome stone villa on the banks of the Rhine. A thousand sweet perfumes borne upon the gentle breeze mounted like incense to the open windows, and sought entrance there. From a great basin in the middle of the garden, a slender shaft of water rose straight up into the blue sky, and then fell splashing back, sprinkling the flowers and the grass with sparkling moisture. Gay butterflies fluttered hither and thither, sipping sweets from the honey-laden flowers. Under the trees stood marble statues gleaming white through the shadows; and seats in sheltered nooks invited the loiterer to rest and listen to the

> concert of the myriad birds that made their happy homes in this paradise of summer beauty.[2]

Only one half sentence brings in a different tone: "*marble* statues gleaming white through *shadows*" (p. 6, italics mine), which does not seem to fit into the bucolic, paradisical scene but to refer to a realm where there is no life. In sharp contrast to the seemingly happy garden scene the text goes on: "At the closed window … sat a little maiden, pressing her *pale* face against the wide, clear glass, as she peered out with *longing eyes over the roses…*" (p. 6, italics mine).

In the course of the chapter the reader is told that this is the ten year old Nora who is sick and will die, as did her father, Mr. Stanhope, and her brother, Philo: "Little Philo closed his eyes forever, and was laid to rest under the old linden-tree in the garden, where the *roses* bloomed all summer long" (p. 18, italics mine). Here again we find the roses (a botanical miracle, since everyone who has grown roses him- or herself knows that they do not grow well under richly leafed trees like linden) little Nora observed so longingly.

How well linked with death this child is we can discern in a conversation Nora has with Clarissa, her mother's companion, whom Nora asks to "repeat the old song of 'Paradise'":

> A stream of water, crystal bright,
> Flows down through meadows green,
> Where lilies, shining in the light,
> Like twinkling starlets gleam.
>
> And roses blow, and roses glow,

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[2] Johanna Spyri, *Gritli's Children* (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1887), 5f [italics mine].

While birds in every tree
Are singing loud, are singing low,
'In Paradise are we.'

Here, gently blows the soft, sweet wind;
Bright flowers grow all around;
Men wake, as from a dream, to find
They tread on holy ground.

In blissful happiness they rove,
At peace with each and all;
United now in bonds of love,
Freed from the grave's dark pall.

All want and weariness are o'er,
All sorrow and all pain;
Their rapture gathers more and more;
The sick are well again." [3]

Clarissa is described as "a person of rare character, and a tower of strength in this household where … her word was followed as law and obeyed with affection" (p. 9), and whose eyes are described as "Mother's eyes" (p. 10). There is a sharp distinction between "mamma", i.e. Mrs. Stanhope who "could not endure the thought of losing little Nora, even though her child were called to heaven" (p. 15), and "Mother" Clarissa who tells the ten year old one: "Yes: go willingly [to heaven], go gladly, dear child…Then you can wander joyfully among the bright flowers, and sing" (p. 15) and tells her miserable mother: "If our darling is to live only to suffer through long years of pain, can you wish for life to her? Why should we wish to keep her here … rather than let her go to that heavenly home, where there is no more sorrow or pain?" (p. 16).

By turning Clarissa into a "Mother" and making Mrs. Stanhope "mamma," a smaller form of the greater "mother," Johanna Spyri makes it quite clear which of the two

women is the greater personality in her eyes and develops an image of motherhood in a particular sense. 'Mother's' word must be followed as a "*law* and *obeyed* with *affection*" (p. 9). This sentence could have been taken from Exodus 20, where it says: "I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents… but showing steadfast love to …those who *love* me and *keep my commandments*" (v. 5). The words *law* and *commandments* equal each other as do *obey* and *keep; affection* and *love*.[4]

In this children's book God is called "good" (p. 118; 164), "our Father in heaven [who] never forgets his children" (p. 156). He "does many things which we cannot understand" (p. 164), but is to be believed, because "as we are told by One whom we can trust that we shall live again after our body dies, we must believe it" (p. 164). Mrs. Stanhope asks: "Why does God take from me my only child [meaning Nora, since Philo died before]?" (p. 160), but this God restores the former status by giving her the half orphans Elsli and Fani, the children of the late Gritli Heiri, as a substitute for her own ones: "God had led the two children .. by such unlooked-for ways into a happy and hopeful life" (p. 193). 'Mother' Clarissa "took great pains that the two children committed to her care [i.e. Elsli and Fani] should not forget the good Father in heaven who had provided such a home for them. She led them often to the spot where Philo and Nora lay buried, and reminded them…[to] have full trust in God, who holds all life in his hand, and who makes both joy and sorrow work together for good to those who love him." (p. 195 f.) This echoes an exact biblical quotation, where we are told "We know

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[3] Ibid., 14.

that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose."(Romans 8:28)

The only criticism I can find in this story is that of a member of the poor working class. Marget, second wife to the "day-laborer" (p. 21) Heiri and substitute for his delicate first wife Gritli, risks some critique by saying: "I can't help thinking sometimes that the Lord God loves some of his children better than other ones" (p. 102). But she is mildly rebuked by the doctor's wife, speaking "in her kindest tones: There are many sufferings besides poverty, and some which are much harder to bear. Our Father in heaven knows why he sends them to us" (p. 102).

This novel never questions suffering, never rebels against it, thus supporting the idea which is found in an old German hymnbook: "All that God does, is well done."[5] Johanna Spyri never raises the question of theodicy, although Mrs. Stanhope dares to ask: "Why must I suffer more than any one else in the world?" (p. 161). But this does not equal Job's lament who "cursed the day of his birth" (3:1) and tells his friends: "I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul" (7:11). Job has made God responsible for his crushed life and proudly says: "Know then that God has put me in the wrong, and closed his net around me" (19:6). Spyri's God does not even permit lamentations. He is the strict "father," who knows best what is good for his "children." Therefore the "children" never dare to question Him. Therefore their sorrows are somehow cursory and shallow. They lack "gall," as Shakespeare's *Hamlet* puts it.

Its continuation can be found in the portrait of that "heaven" this "good God" lives in: All its items are in Clarissa's song of Paradise. They strangely resemble the entering description of the bucolic scene Nora had watched so longingly. Here again, there is the stream. It was the river Rhine in the opening scene, here it is a stream *crystal bright,* which seems to be a quotation from the Book of Revelation, where the angel shows "the river the water of life, *bright* as *crystal*, flowing from the throne of God (22:1, italics mine).

Again Clarissa's Paradise song refers to the *roses* and *birds* of the opening scene. Even the *gentle breeze* is there as *gently blows of the soft, sweet wind* in the song. According to this poem heaven is the absence of "want," "weariness," "sorrow and pain" and ends in the significant line: "The sick are well again." This "heaven" does not speak of a transformation into those beings God created in "his image" (Gen.1:27). The heaven Spyri designs consists of words only, as does the ostensibly bucolic opening scenery of her children's book. Let us give it one closer look. The words describe clichés, not a genuine world: *golden* sunshine, *glorious* June morning, *sweet perfumes*, *gay* butterflies, *myriad* birds which made their *happy homes* show no genuine emotions, not a real picture of a beautiful landscape or nature. They are artificial. The portrait of the "Mother," that is Clarissa, corresponds to this cliché. This "mother" is not a human person but presents an abstraction, rather. There is no emotion, no genuine suffering, misery, happiness, or joy. It is as artificial as the scenery in which the story plays.

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[5] Severus Gastorius, 1674. *Was Gott tut, das ist wohlgetan.* Evangelisches Kirchengesangbuch (Hannover: Schlütersche Buchdruckerei, n.d.) no. 299.

So because paradise and its equivalent in the mundane world are clichés, because the description of "motherhood" and "God" are rigid, there is no development of depth and character within the book. Persons are static, there is no genuine transformation. Therefore heaven can be seen as the fittest answer in the "solving" of problems, related to this world: the problems of suffering or poverty. Both of these subjects are never tackled genuinely.

Gritli's Kinder is a story of escapism and the author who tells her readers that this is "a story for children and those who love children" betrays the children she writes about. Nora is a mere excuse for Spyri's preaching morality to her readers. Elsli's sufferings from poverty and illness deliver the background for describing the "good God" under whose reign "quickly and unexpectedly sorrow may be changed into joy," but at the same time "just so quickly joy may be changed to sorrow" (p. 196). The question, how any child can develop a love for such an ambiguous, unpredictable God who is not trustworthy, cannot be answered. Spyri designs a God who strangely resembles the patriarchs of her time, fathers, who were not nurturing, protective, or accountable to their children but nevertheless had to be obeyed, venerated, and trusted. What is being affirmed is a negative theology. But Spyri thinks of it as positive. It is time to give these children a voice, because "women may hold a key to replacing violence with speaking, … and healing wounds which otherwise fester from generation to generation ---in short, to establishing democracy and civilization."[6]

Heidi

Whereas *Gritli's Children* was written in 1878 and appeared in the volume *Heimathlos* (Homeless), *Heidi's Lehr- und Wanderjahre* (Heidi's Years of Apprenticeship and Travel) was issued in 1880. Instead of the author's name it bears the reference "Von der Verfasserin von *Ein Blatt von Vrony's Grab*" (by the Author of *A Sheet on Vrony's Grave*).

The title *Heidi's Lehr- und Wanderjahre* is a title that Spyri borrowed from the German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe. His world classic *Wilhelm Meister* was issued in two parts, part one in 1795/96 as *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Apprenticeship), part two in 1821 as *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (Wilhelm Meister's Years of Travel). They describe the psychological and physical development of a young man and are summarized under the topic "novels of development" or "Bildungsroman." Apart from the young man's development they describe his careful education. To read *Wilhelm Meister* was a must for every educated German-speaking person before World War II, and the novels still have to be read by students of German literature. As Spyri venerated Goethe it is no coincidence that she chose this title. But here ends the similarity. Spyri is not interested in Heidi's education for its own sake. Heidi will never learn more than literacy and a bit of sewing, and any

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[6] Carol Gilligan, "Remembering Iphigenia: Voice, Resonance, and a Talking Cure," in Edward R.Shapiro, ed., *The Inner World in the Outer World: A Psychodynamic Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 12.

forms of "development" will certainly end in the second part of the book *Heidi Applies What She Has Learned.*

Now, who is Heidi? In the *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* Gisela Wilkending describes her as a girl who is "not sound, coming from an intact landscape of nature, but [a child] who is hurt from the very beginning and which needs a perpetual climate of healing… She is homeless in the third generation… Her mother is longing for death."[7] Is she "Mignon's Redeemed Sister… who is allowed to return and must not die as her unhappy sister [i.e. Mignon] does, who cannot be helped, when she leaves her childhood behind," as Bettina Hurrelmann sees it?[8] Or is she "the little unsophisticated mountain maiden [who] comes like a breath of upper air. Her experiences are charmingly portrayed, and one entirely forgets that one is not reading a transcript from real life, so vivid is the characterization, so perfect the realism, so consistent the narration,"[9] a description that Nathan Haskell Dole provides in the introduction to *Heidi* in 1899? Or is *Heidi* "a conservative product of the nineteenth century which has kept very much alive in the twentieth...It concerns the experiences of a little girl, who is made into some kind of an extraordinary angel, a nature child with holy innocence, incapable of doing evil, gentle, loving, and kind," as Jack Zipes depicts her in his essay "The

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7 Gisela Wilkending in Reiner Wild, ed. *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1990), 245 [translation mine].

8 Bettina Hurrelmann, ed., *Klassiker der Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuchverlag GmbH., 1997), 210 [translation mine].

9 Johanna Spyri, *Heidi: A Little Swiss Girl's City and Mountain Life* (Boston, New York, Chicago, London: Ginn & Company, 1899), vi.

International Scene in Children's Literature" with the subtitle *Down with Heidi, Down with Struwwelpeter, Three Cheers for the Revolution.* [10]

Heidi indeed belongs to a broken family. Both her parents die, when the child is one year old. Her aunt Dete reports to her acquaintance Barbel:

> Tobias [Heidi's father] married my sister Adelheid, for they had always been fond of each other and after their marriage they lived happily together. But it did n't [sic] last long. Two years after, while Tobias was working on a new house, a beam fell on him and killed him. Adelheid's fright and grief when her husband was brought home so disfigured threw her into a violent fever, from which she did not recover. She never was very strong, and was often in such a condition that it was almost impossible to tell whether she was asleep or awake. Only two weeks after Tobias's death Adelheid too was buried.[11]

This conversation gives us two important hints: Heidi's parents had loved each other – the term "been fond of each other" is certainly the utmost praise for marital life which the priggish Johanna Spyri would chose, since she clearly avoids any reference to love or sexuality. Compared to her the British model author for delicately portrayed human relationships, Jane Austen (1775-1817), is utterly outspoken in her praises of love and matrimony. The quoted paragraph introduces another topic as well, that of mental illness. Adelheid is depicted as one who "was often in such a condition that it was almost impossible to tell whether she was asleep or awake." There is a clear relationship to Heidi's own sleepwalking in Frankfurt later on, which seems to be the only way for Heidi to compensate her longing for the Alpine world, but above all for her beloved grandfather. When Heidi lived with her grandfather there was no need for sleep-walking.

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[10] Jack Zipes, "The International Scene in Children's Literature," In *Children's Literature*, 5 (1976): 162-79.

[11] Johanna Spyri, *Heidi*, 8.

On the contrary, we are told that "the moonlight came… brightly through the round opening and fell directly on Heidi's couch… she lay perfectly calm and peaceful."[12] The same happens when Klara is sharing the hayloft with Heidi: "Oh, Heidi, see, it is just as if we were riding in the sky in a high carriage!… Then Heidi laid her head on her round arm and was asleep in a moment."[13] So Heidi's sleepwalking is caused by grief, as might her mother Adelheid's, who seems to escape to sickness in times of great emotional tensions.

But Dete's conversation with Barbel provides us with another strand of information, when she reports about Heidi's grandfather as a drunkard and gambler who brought grief and misery about his own family, who is supposed to have killed somebody in a quarrel and is therefore deeply isolated. In connection with the death of his only son and his daughter-in-law "it was hinted and openly declared that it was a judgment the uncle deserved for his godless life. It was said so to his face; even the priest admonished him seriously to do penance, but he only grew more and more surly and obdurate."[14] This does not hinder Dete from bringing her niece Heidi to this threatening, misanthropic old man, after she and her old mother had looked after the child for three years and after Heidi had to stay with an old woman, when Dete's own mother died. This old woman, Ursel,

> …was always cold, so that she liked to sit by the kitchen fire or the stove in her chamber. Heidi [four years old! My parenthesis] had been obliged to stay very near, so that the old woman could see where she was, because she was deaf and

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12 Ibid., 27 f.
13 Ibid., 299 f.
14 Ibid., 8 f.

could not hear her. This had often been very irksome to Heidi, who longed to run outside.[15]

This early deprivation of any form of movement certainly explains Heidi's strong feelings of being caged in Frankfurt, where going "home" has become a synonym for freedom.[16] So at the age of not yet five years, Heidi becomes an orphan and was brought up in three different families or looked after by a single person. From the point of psychology it must have been her very first year which enabled her to cope with at least some of the hardships to follow. This first year was spent under the care of loving parents, and the psychologists of all ages do not tire of emphasizing the importance of the first year of life in a child's upbringing. When at the age of not yet five years she comes to her grandfather, she finds him a loving person, as well. Contrary to what is reported about the old man, this grandfather is caring (providing her with food, p. 24), looking after her in a stormy night, (p.27), protective (his concern for her delicate nature which *he* sees linked to her mother, p. 69), encouraging Heidi's curiosity (when she wants to see the hut, p. 18) and her skills (where she manages to lay the table, p. 23). He can see the child's gifts: "She is not lacking in intelligence," (p. 19) "She knows what she sees…, her eyes are in the right place" (p. 25) and so his affirmation is an antidote to Fräulein Rottenmeier, whose educational skills as a governess seem to consist of intimidation and contempt, which were unnerving for this particular pupil.

Both representatives of education, Fräulein Rottenmeier and the Herr Kandidat, are unable to recognize Heidi's immense creativity. But where Herr Kandidat simply fails

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15 Ibid., 29.

to interpret the richness that Heidi sees in the mere pictures of letters, which she compares "to a little horn and another to a beak, [which made her] exclaim with delight: "It is a goat!" or "It is the robber-bird!,"[17] and which he is unable to use as an element of teaching, Fräulein Rottenmeier employs what Alice Miller terms as "Black Pedagogics."[18] When Heidi had made a tour in order to see the "mountains" around Frankfurt and had ended up with the tower-keeper's kittens, Fräulein Rottenmeier thinks it appropriate to announce that the only means of educating her will be putting her into the cellar: "only one punishment which could have any effect on you, for you are a barbarian; but we shall see whether you will not become civilized down in the dark cellar with lizards and rats."[19] She, who is afraid of kittens and turtles herself, thinks of rats as the apt means to "civilize" the "barbarian." But her "black pedagogics" reach the standard of true sadism, when she forces this child of eight years to sit still and alone in her room after lunch time: "Every day after dinner [in Germany, 'dinner' is taken at lunch time] Heidi sat for two long hours quiet and alone in her room, for she was not allowed to run outdoors in Frankfurt as she did on the Alm."[20]

Klara's grandmother, the lively old Frau Sesemann, is the only one to see through this kind of pedagogics, when Fräulein Rottenmeier complains that Heidi has [not] "the slightest inclination to do anything…" and Mrs. Sesemann answers: "I should do the

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16 Ibid., 119.

17 Ibid., 118.

18 Alice Miller, *For Your Own Good: Hidden Cruelty in Child-Rearing, and the Roots of Violence*, trans. by Hildegarde and Hunter Hannum (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1983). The term "black" has negative, but not racial implications in Europe.

19 Spyri, *Heidi*, 117.

20 Ibid., 118.

same if I had to sit there alone as this child does, I assure you, and you would see how you would speak of my nonsense in refined society."[21]

The friendliness of this grandmother who does not act as a "Gnädige Frau"[the official term of address used and still in use for ladies of upper classes in Germany] helps and enables Heidi to learn to read, but fails to explore Heidi's genuine sorrows. Even weeping and sobbing is forbidden to Heidi, when she forms the idea that Goatherd Peter's grandmother might have died. Fräulein Rottenmeier again acts in a true sadistic way: "Adelheid, we have had enough of your useless screaming! …if you ever again, while you are reading your stories, give vent to such an outbreak, I will take the book way from you and not return it." This book is Heidi's greatest treasure because it gives a glimpse of her lost Alpine world via its pictures. So Fräulein Rottenmeier immediately achieves the desired effect: "Heidi turned pale with fright. The book was her dearest treasure. She hastily dried her tears and swallowed and choked down her sobs with all her might…many a time she had to make such an effort to control herself and not scream out, that Klara often said…: "Heidi, you are making the most frightful faces I ever saw!"[22] Nobody even questions the results of these attempts of "civilization," when Heidi not only gives up speaking but eating, as well. It is the servant Sebastian, who tries to coax Heidi into eating just a little bit by telling her: "Take some of it, Mamsell, it is fine. Not such a little! A good spoonful, and another!"[23] But childhood horrors cannot be solved by eating, solely, and the unconventional "grandmamma Sesemann" is far away on her estate in the North of Germany.

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21 Ibid., 138.

She is the one who advises Heidi to pray, after the child had refused to tell either her or Klara about her unhappiness and deep desolation: "When we have a sorrow we cannot speak to anybody about, then we tell the dear God in heaven, and ask him to help us, for he can take away every sorrow that troubles us."[24] It is unbelievable that a person depicted with as much insight as Mrs. Sesemann does not bother to find out about the child's grief. Even she starts to pressurize her when she finds out that Heidi has given up praying, because God did not answer, telling her: "...when the dear Lord no longer hears his [the supplicant's] voice in prayer, he forgets him, too, and lets him go whither he will. But when one is in trouble and complains, 'There is no one to help me!' we feel no pity for him, but say: 'You yourself ran away from the dear Lord, who could have helped you!'"[25] One cannot help but notice the disastrous theological implications this response will have on Heidi. To tell this to an eight year old child is genuine cruelty, because it makes Heidi responsible for the trouble she is in a threefold way: Not only is she source of her own sorrow because she is not patiently waiting ("You see, what you wished to ask of him [God] was not good for you just now"),[26] but God himself has righteously left her, after she had "left" him. For someone, however, who has left God on his or her own , "we feel no pity." This is the exact pattern of self-righteousness which turned Heidi's unhappy grandfather into an outcast: "...every door was closed to him, and no one wanted to know anything more about him. This made him very bitter."[27] This pattern, where the unhappy

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22 Ibid., 154 f.
23 Ibid., 154.
24 Ibid., 143.
25 Ibid., 151.
26 Ibid., 150.
27 Ibid., 7.

person will always be in the wrong, makes it clear why Spyri is not interested in genuine social change. Somehow everybody afflicted is responsible for her or his own misery, because at some point in her or his life she/ he will certainly have "left" God or might have prayed for something "not good enough … just now." So, similar to the theological perspective in *Gritli's Children*, this "good God" is always in the right, and misery and sorrow are always self made and self-inflicted.

In the second part of the book this God is a mere cliché for the restored happiness of nearly everybody. Spyri is not afraid to use the gems of German Protestant Hymns such as Paul Gerhardt's beautiful song "Die güldne Sonne,"[28]:

> The sun o'erflowing
> With splendor glowing
> From golden fountains
> Pours o'er our mountains
> A spirit quickening glory of light.
>
> Below I wandered
> And, mournful, pondered,
> But now arising
> With change surprising
> I turn to the sky my enraptured sight,
>
> Mine eye beholdeth
> What God unfoldeth
> To tell the story
> Of boundless glory –
> How vast the sum of his infinite might!

but fails to give the message that this pastor was not only suffering from great private afflictions, but that he was acting politically as well, when he resigned his post in the

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[28] Ibid., 198 f.

Berlin Nikolaikirche in 1666, because he was unwilling to sign the "Syncretist edicts of the Elector of Brandenburg." Spyri exploits the hymn from the point of creating an "atmosphere," where the metaphors "sun" and "grief" are used. From now on Heidi has become a mere example and exponent of the message of the "good God" herself. She is the child-preacher, who even converts her grandfather, the Prodigal Son:

> [Heidi] lay there with folded hands, for Heidi had not forgotten to pray. On her rosy face was an expression of peace and blessed trust that must have appealed to her grandfather, for he stood there a long, long time without moving or taking his eyes from the sleeping child. Then he, too, folded the hands and half aloud, with bowed head, said:
> "Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee and am no more worthy to be called Thy son!" and great tears rolled down his cheeks.[29]

From now on the grandfather returns to the fold, accepted by the priest and the congregation. All hardships are forgotten.

When the miserable Doctor from Frankfurt, whose only daughter had just died, seeks healing in the Alpine landscape, it is the child-preacher Heidi again, who reminds him: "[You] must tell everything to the dear Lord, if [you do not] know what to do" and reminds him "...you must wait... and keep thinking: 'Surely now the dear Lord knows some joy which is to come out of this by and by, so I must be still for a little and not run away from Him.' Then all at once it will happen so that you will see quite clearly that the dear Lord had nothing but good in His mind all the time."[30] The message is clear: he, the healer who helped Heidi once to recover her physical health by sending her back to her grandfather and the Swiss Alps, is in need of salvation himself. For Spyri the bodily

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29 Ibid., 204.
30 Ibid., 241.

restoration counts less than the spiritual one. So Jack Zipes states correctly: "Material poverty is insignificant when one considers the real meaning of richness: to be rich means *possessing* faith in God and behaving like a good Christian – that is, making sacrifices to benefit the wealthy and looking forward to paradise in the world hereafter."[31] Nevertheless, I wished that Zipes would make it clear that he is referring to a "good Christian" according to Spyri, because a "good Christian" in general is a commonplace in itself and needs to be specified more concretely.

This blend of beautiful biblical narratives, old hymns, and a rigid picture of a God who never seems to be near in *Heidi*, is hardly endurable. The clichés repeat themselves again and again. As the grandfather is "cured" and converted by the narration of the Prodigal Son, so the doctor is healed by a hymn, which his mother used to sing and which brings back his childhood memories. The illustration of this scene by an anonymous artist makes it quite clear that here a ten year old child soothes and nurtures an adult man. The motherly expression on Heidi's face is not to be misinterpreted. This is a world, where adults only count and little girls are used as a means of either making adults happy or entertaining them by their "innocent" drôleries. But the little girl Heidi is never allowed to stand for her own self.

Heidi's success

For the most part, the treatment of "God" is seen similarly as in *Gritli's Kinder*. The genuinely new and overwhelming impression in *Heidi* is Spyri's outlook and her

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31 Zipes, 166f.

dealing with the topic of "nature." There is no comparison with the rigid and artificial description of nature as it was seen in *Gritli's Children.* In *Heidi* Spyri succeeds in painting landscapes of such an incredible beauty that will stay in the memory of her readers, despite the faults depicted above:

> The valley lay far below in the full morning sunshine. In front of her Heidi saw a great wide field of snow, stretching high up into the deep blue sky; on the left stood an enormous mass of rock, on each side of which a higher tower of bald, jagged crags rose into the azure and looked very sternly down on Heidi. The child sat as still as a mouse; everywhere there was a great, deep stillness; only the wind passed very softly and gently over the tender bluebells and the radiant golden rock-roses... She drank in the golden sunlight, the fresh air, the delicate fragrance of the flowers, and desired nothing more than to remain there forever.[32]

Even the great Swiss poet Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, whose mother and sister Betsy both were befriended by Spyri, acknowledges that "the most beautiful chapter probably is the first day on the pasture."[33] The landscape that Spyri depicts here, is exceptional in its depictions of beauty when compared to children's books written in her own time or since. Bettina Hurrelmann justly states: "Those passages [depicting the "landscape of the soul"] which repeat themselves, cause a sensuous, almost bewitching effect" and continues: "Here the whole human being is addressed and feels that in a religious sense he or she is meant as a whole. A mythical understanding of a homogeneous whole clearly rings... ."[34] Hurrelmann develops the theory that it is in *Heidi* only that Spyri dared to "draw a piece of history on the soul which is far more

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[32] Spyri, *Heidi*, 33f.

[33] Jürg Winkler, *Johanna Spyri: Aus dem Leben der "Heidi"-Autorin* (Zürich, Rüschlikon, 1986), 146 [translation mine].

[34] Hurrelmann, 206 [translation mine].

dangerous…and provides the real fascination of the story of Heidi, a fascination which makes itself felt even today."[35]

Hurrelmann refers to an analysis about *Heidi*, written by Hansjürgen Kiepe [36] which to her proves that "the presentation of nature [in *Heidi*].. is no realistic description but an evocation of a landscape of the soul, God's landscape, in which individual and nature are united."[37] But Kiepe titles his whole essay "*God's Landscape*" and sees it as a "wordly 'unio mystica'" and continues vaguely that "a certain proximity towards a mystic experience of God is not to be ruled out completely in Johanna Spyri's depictions"[38] He convincingly proves that "Spyri's landscapes live..by light- and wind-appearances"[39] and states that "[these] light- and fragrance-appearances and the sounds of wind which dominate the manifestations of landscape… are not experienced as reality…but give the landscape as a whole a magical character."[40] He concludes that "in the mystic character of experiencing landscape … Johanna Spyri's landscape proves to be God's landscape."[41] Kiepe speaks of Spyri's "unpretentious religiosity,"[42] but fails to see through it. He does not analyze Spyri's image of God, which probably is not his topic. His topic is the "unio mystica" of humankind, landscape, and a God that is taken for granted.

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35 Ibid., 206. [translation mine]

36 Hansjürgen Kiepe, "Landschaft Gottes: Zur Rolle der Verbzusätze in Johanna Spyri's "*Heidi*," in *Wirkendes Wort* 17 (1967): 410-429.

37 Hurrelmann, 206 [translation mine].

38 Kiepe, 426 [translation mine].

39 Ibid., 415 [translation mine].

40 Ibid., 424 [translation mine].

41 Ibid., 428 [translation mine].

42 Ibid., 428 [translation mine].

Bettina Hurrelmann has a deeper insight, when she calls Spyri's portrayals of landscape an "evocation of a soul-landscape." Both Hurrelmann's assumptions of *Heidi's* depiction of a "history of the soul" and the presentation of a landscape as a "landscape of the soul," uniting nature and the individual – could explain *Heidi*' s success even today. A world in which the individual and nature are exploited to a degree that is unheard of, will react with a craving for realms where the individual can find new sources of support and nourishment, thus enabling it to cope with an inimical reality. A "landscape of the soul," uniting nature *and* the individual could be the solution.

For Gisela Wilkending the experience of "disease and separation" is the center of *Heidi.* And she continues: "It is the experience of homelessness which on first sight the author solely places on to the opposition of the Alpine world as home and the large city Frankfort as the quintessence of civilization causing disease." But at the same time Wilkending sees "Frankfurt as the necessary room for development."[43] It would comprise the "craving for harmony in a deeply discordant world," the experience of being injured and in need of a "perpetual salubrious climate." The "injured child" is the realization of the 20th century with two World Wars and its fundamental experience of homelessness that makes this book a classic. This experience is shared by children of all colors all over the world. It is more than Jack Zipes' statement that Heidi "is a figure of the infantile,

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43 Wilkending., 245 [translation mine].

regressive fantasy which desires a lost innocence that never was."[44] Bettina Hurrelmann has a deeper understanding when she writes:

> *Heidi* procures the license for children and adults to regress. He who is of the opinion that regression in children's literature ought not be permitted may criticize the novel as trivial. But he misunderstands that all great literature helps us to revive archaic yearnings in ourselves, to fetch them back into our consciousness and to solve unconscious tensions. It is not that we shall become like the heroes but that we find out something about ourselves which perhaps helps us.[45]

Mary McClintock Fulkerson develops an interesting theory about the reading of romances. Those women involved "understand their obsessive romance reading as resistance to the domination of their lives by husbands and children" and she cites Janice Radway who worked with a group of romance readers: "Radway argues that romance readers' use of the literature has a kind of *utopian function* as well as a *compensatory*-ideological one."[46]
This interpretation does not seem to be so far away from Hurrelmann's "archaic yearnings" for rooms where we find ourselves wanted, accepted, and consoled. Seen from this point of view, whole passages of the first part of *Heidi* offer a nourishment for the soul we all need, may we be old or young.

The healing aspect of literature is analyzed by Peter Gilmour who found out that

> the healing dimension of classic and contemporary texts, like medicine, is an imprecise science. The objectivity of the existence of any given text must be filtered through the subjectivity of the potential and actual relationship between story and audience. The mystery of the relational process must be honored, protected, and preserved. This is particularly significant when highlighting the

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[44] Zipes, 167.
[45] Hurrelmann, 212 [translation mine].
[46] Mary McClintock Fulkerson, "Contesting Feminist Canons: Discourse and the Problems of Sexist Texts," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 7 (1991), 68 f (53-73) [italics mine].

> healing dimension of the narrative dynamic ... Texts ... like medicine become an important part of but not the sole element of healing.[47]

This healing aspect of literature certainly refers to *Heidi* and explains the book's great success.

From Phyllis Trible we learn that

> stories are the style and substance of life. They fashion and fill existence. From primeval to eschatological vistas, from youthful dreams to seasoned experiences, from resounding disclosures to whispered intimacies, the narrative mode of speech prevails... Storytelling is a trinitarian act that unites writer, text, and reader in a collage of understanding.[48]

This level of narrative art is certainly achieved in parts of *Heidi.*

David Tracy tells us about the criteria of a "classic":

> The notion of a classic is not confined to classicist norms. Rather, the experience of the classic remains a permanent feature of any human being's cultural experience ... My thesis is that what we mean in naming certain texts, events, images, rituals, symbols and persons "classics" is that here we recognize nothing less than the disclosure of a reality we cannot but name truth.[49]

This passage conveys two important messages: firstly, a classic is linked with a human being's cultural experience, secondly, a classic discloses truth. Both aspects fit into *Heidi,* part one. But Tracy reveals the other half of the coin as well when he looks through theologies:

> The difference between conservative Protestant evangelical theologies and fundamentalist, the difference between the traditionalism of Archbishop Lefevbre's movement and the profound respect for tradition in Hans Urs von

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[47] Peter Gilmour, "The Healing Dimension of Classic and Contemporary Texts", *Religious Education,* 89 (1994): 203f.

[48] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), 1.

[49] David Tracy, *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (New York: Crossroad, 1987), 108.

> Balthasar is a difference become a chasm. Indeed, fundamentalist and authoritarian theologies, properly considered, are not theologies at all.[50]

This is certainly the case with Spyri's adaptation of a "good God," who serves as a rigid monument of patriarchy. We see, then, that many reasons have been adduced for *Heidi*'s success as a children's classic. But whether one points to its evocation of the "landscape of the soul" (Hurrelmann), or its embodiment of the experience of "disease and reparatism" (Wilkending), or its retrieval of lost innocence (Zipes), or its more profound resuscitation of "archaic yearnings in ourselves" (Hurrelmann) that unlocks a "healing" dimension (Gilman), I would only accord classic status to the first part of *Heidi*, 'classic' meaning that this status enables a sort of timelessness. As I have already indicated, the second part of the book is marred by its clichéd piety and its manipulative portrayal of Heidi as a foil of the "good God." But perhaps these theological deficiencies will be understood better after we have learned more about Johanna Spyri's life.

Johanna Spyri's Location

Johanna Spyri, born 1827 as Johanna Louise Heusser, was the fourth of six children. Her father owned a small clinic where he housed mentally ill persons. Spyri's mother Meta wrote religious poetry and was well known in pietistic circles. In 1852 Spyri married the Zurich jurist Johann Bernhard Spyri, and in 1855 she gave birth to her only son Bernhard Diethelm. Judging from her letters, it is to be assumed that Spyri suffered from depression and a strong sense of guilt, perhaps linked with her pietistic education.

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[50] Tracy, 99.

She was befriended by Betsy Meyer, sister of the famous Conrad Ferdinand Meyer, who himself suffered from deep depression throughout all his life and whose mother committed suicide in 1856. This mother strongly influenced Spyri with her pietism.

Johanna Spyri probably was unhappy in her marriage and felt guilty about it. She wrote to Betsy Meyer when she was expecting her son: "New life never rises unless the old one deteriorates; I look towards my young life and let fall off from the old one whatever has to be sacrificed. In this procedure I become more silent than ever."[51]

But her depression did not end with the birth of her son: "Yes, dear Betsy, there is guilt upon my heart, as well, but I do not know whether it is really the sense of this guilt that oppresses me so deeply or something else, linked with it."[52]

When the reformed pastor Cornelius Rudolf Vietor from Bremen in Germany came to know Johanna Spyri, he coaxed her into writing, and so her first story appeared in 1871, that already cited *A Sheet on Vrony's Grave*. So writing seemed to become a means of dealing with her depression, and at the same time her personal background, however, explained the absence of eroticism and passion. They were probably too strong for her and so she escaped into a world of sexless persons, mainly widows and widowers (in *Heidi* itself as many as Goatherd Peter's grandmother, his mother, grandmother Sesemann, Heidi's grandfather, Herr Sesemann, the doctor) or spinsters and bachelors like Dete, Sebastian, Tinette, Fräulein Rottenmeier, and Herr Kandidat. Sexuality seemed to be something highly forbidden and undesirable for Johanna Spyri. On the other hand

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51 Letter from 3.29.1855, Winkler, 96 [translation mine].

she might have been a guilt-ridden woman all her life were it not that she had taken up the invitation to writing.

We have seen so far that *Heidi* definitely is not "the little unsophisticated mountain maiden" Nathan Haskell Dole wants her to be. She is the complicated product of a complicated world. These traits make the book a classic. Children raised in a complicated world can find traces of themselves in it. The book's faults, comprising the whole second part, are the negative theological implications of a "good God" who is a mere cliché. Its positive first part, on the other hand, describes a child who is able to return to her childhood landscape:

> Rosy clouds floated above, and the sky grew bluer and bluer, and the heights and the pasture land seemed flooded with bright gold, for the sun was just rising above the lofty cliffs.
> 'Oh, how beautiful! Oh, how beautiful! Good morning, grandfather,' Heidi called out as she came skipping along.[53]

It shows the incredible joy of someone who is able to return to where he/she belongs. And this describes something deep in ourselves; all who have been "homeless" at some time, want to find or return to a place where we "belong to" or are "at home" within ourselves.

Heidi compares favorably with *Gritli's Kinder* with the exception of the topic of "the good God" which is certainly rooted in Spyri's own life as well as in the Europe of her time. What theological resources does this story offer? Is there a biblical text which conveys a similar message as *Heidi*? What role do children, particularly girls, play in biblical narratives?

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[52] Letter from 5.13.1857, 115 [translation mine] all citations after Hurrelmann, 204.

As response to these questions, I want to establish a literary and hermeneutical comparison between *Heidi* and the unknown handmaiden of 2 Kings 5:1-5 and hope that by juxtaposing the Spyri-text of the 19th century with the biblical text that they may illuminate each other. I will use the "hermeneutics of critical evaluation"[54](Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza) as an interpretive tool.

2 Kings 5:1-7

The narratives collected here are composed around the prophet Elisha and his miracles: Elisha and the Widow's Oil, 2 Kings 4:1-8; Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son, 2 Kings 4:32-37; The Healing of Naaman, 2 Kings 5:1-14; The Aramean Attack Is Thwarted, 2 Kings 6:8-22; The Shunammite Woman's Land Restored, 2 King 8:1-6. But they have another astonishing aim: They tell about the healing of "outsiders" and so can be compared to Jesus and his healing of the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman, for example.

The NRSV title of this passage is "Naaman and Gehazi." Naaman, the great commander of the Aramaic army, who seems to have achieved everything in life, suffers from one blemish, he is a leper. Gehazi is the servant of the prophet Elisha. But when Naaman is healed from his illness, Gehazi has to take over Naaman's leprosy, because he is greedy for Naaman's money which the prophet would not take.

The narrative starts with praises of Naaman's achievements: "He was a great man … and highly regarded …through him the Lord had given victory to Aram … He was a

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53 Spyri, 225.

valiant soldier, but he had leprosy." (2 Kings 5:1). The next verse introduces the nameless young woman who will be the means of curing Naaman: "...bands from Aram ...had taken captive a girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.'"

These two sentences which are all we have, reveal a great deal about the person who says them. The girl is a captive, she is an adolescent with no influence whatsoever, she does not even have a name. But she is a gentle girl, not hardened by her captivity. She does not think evil; on the contrary, she wants her master to be healed. She has great faith in Elisha's doings. And she must have had a way of quietly convincing others: Naaman's wife must have spoken about the girl's advice to her husband, because he is willing to do what the girl suggests. All in all, this is an unusual girl with an unusual faith. The story contrasts her to the king of Israel and the commentary continues: "Ironically, the king of Israel does not seem to know what the captive slave girl in Damascus knows: that there is a prophet in Samaria who could perform the miracle. He sees only the impossibility of the case; she sees its possibility."[55]

The reflections on this text compare her way of acting to the greedy behavior of Gehazi: "In stark contrast to Gehazi is the unnamed Israelite slave at the beginning of the chapter. Despite her lowly status and her captivity in a foreign land, she is faithful. Although far from her homeland, her eyes of faith perceive hope for her Aramean master.

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[54] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), 68-73.

[55] Choon-Leong Seow, "1 and 2 Kings," in Daniel J. Harrington, ed., *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. III (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 193.

The king of Israel, on the other hand, could only despair, even though salvation was at hand in Samaria."[56]

Another of the few comments we find about this story conveys a very condescending attitude towards the unnamed girl: "Once more a major role is played by a minor biblical character. How little did she realize, the humble Hebrew girl, what her native piety – her only distinction – was to achieve. She did not hide her faith in God; she used it."[57]

From the biblical text we cannot tell, if her "native piety" was her sole distinction. The interpretation does not analyze what is meant by "native" piety. Is there a collective piety to be found in a whole nation? And if so, how come that this "piety" did not hinder that great harm was done to the "pious nation," and its "humble girls" could be taken away as slaves? The excellent essay by Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan deals with the subject from a far deeper insight:

> ...The unit ends with an added notice that not only is Naaman's flesh restored, it is like that of a "young boy", a perfect counterpart to the captive "young girl" in verse 2. The beginning of the story provides a great contrast between Naaman and the nameless young maid. At the end of the story, he has become like her. ...The servants .. are instrumental in moving Naaman from his problem to its solution. ...Rejecting the young maid's suggestion as foolishness or the servants' reasoning as contemptible would have thwarted the movement. It is ironic that those with power throw up obstacles while those who are without power move efficiently toward the desired goal.[58]

Ngan contrasts the girl's behavior to that of Elisha's servant Gehazi:

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[56] Ibid., 198.

[57] Raymond Calkin, "II Kings," in George Arthur Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1954), vol. III, 210.

[58] Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan, "2 Kings 5: Healing God and Man," *Review and Expositor* 94 (Fall 1997), 591.

> Though both are servants and have similar stations in life, the young maid is decidedly in a worse situation. Torn from family and homeland, she is the spoils of war. Whatever normalcy of life has been stripped from her, she is now a slave in her captor's house. She is the lowliest in Syrian society, an enslaved foreigner, and at that, a young female. Being found in such devastating circumstances, it is all the more remarkable that she speaks words of genuine concern for her master's well-being, and not of bitterness and hatred or despair. Her speech (v. 3) is a testament of her gracious spirit and of her faith in God. The young maid is not called, has not been sent, and will not be paid for her service to God, but in the difficult situation in which she finds herself, she remains a faithful witness to the God of Israel… Even if nothing else changes in the young maid's life, one thing is certainly different. She is no longer the lone Yahweh worshipper in Naaman's house.[59]

Although Heidi definitely is no "captive" in the sense as is the unnamed adolescent, she herself is taken to Frankfurt against her own wishes: "I shall not come," is her answer to her Aunt Dete (p. 74), and only when Dete promises her "you can come home if you want to" (p. 75) and leaves her under this deception she is willing to go. We learn nothing about the conditions of life for the slave girl in Syria, but we have seen how much Heidi was exposed to the cruelties of Fräulein Rottenmeier and even the friendly Frau Sesemann lacked insight into the child's sufferings. Nevertheless Heidi remains the gentle child. Like the captured girl she is not hardened by her "exile" but more mindful and attentive to others, as for example to the crippled Klara. Although Heidi is robbed of her own life in Frankfurt and – to a certain degree – her childhood, there is a resistance in her spirit. But it needs a "deus ex machina" in the person of the doctor who sees that "her condition is no illness that can be cured with powders and pills" (p. 171).

When Heidi is back to where she belongs, she starts liberating others as we have seen. Klara is healed, Goatherd Peter's grandmother restored to happiness, the doctor

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[59] Ibid., 594.

provided with a substitute daughter by Heidi in person. Heidi is even willing to sacrifice her newly gained happiness for the sake of the doctor when she tells him: "I will truly go with you to Frankfort [sic] now, and I will stay with you as long as you like," (p. 250) because she cannot bear to see him unhappy. When he refuses, he does it in an ambiguous way, with tinges of a lover and a father united: "If I am ever sick and alone, will you come to me then and stay with me? Can I think that then some one will care for me and love me?" (p. 251)

There is no question of what Heidi herself would like to do in her future. Both her grandfather and the doctor have made plans for her already:

> "My dear uncle," said the doctor..., as he was standing ... with the old man [Heidi's grandfather], "you must look at the matter as I do. I share all joy in the child with you, as if next to you I were the one to whom the child belongs; I will share all obligations and care for the child as well as I know how. So I have also my right in our Heidi, and can hope that she will care for me in my old age and stay with me; this is my greatest desire. Heidi shall share my property as my own child; so we can leave her without any anxiety when we have to go away from her – you and I." [60]

For unmarried women of Spyri's time it is the greatest gift to be provided for. It is clear that Heidi will have no further education and as marriage is a difficult subject for Spyri, as we have seen, it will be best for her to stay single. Both the grandfather and the doctor do not feel that they are acting in a selfish way, on the contrary: "The uncle pressed the doctor's hand for a long time; he spoke not a word, but his good friend could read in the old man's eyes the emotion and keen delight which his words [to provide for Heidi] had aroused." (p. 363)

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[60] Spyri, *Heidi*, 362 f.

We do not hear about a reward for the biblical slave-girl. So Lai Ling Elizabeth Ngan observes: "The text does not record what happens to Naaman and his household upon his return. Is the young maid rewarded for her suggestion? Does he free her to return home, or does she continue to be a maid for his wife?"[61] We can only speculate that a man who was willing to offer Elisha's unfaithful servant Gehazi "two talents of silver… with two changes of clothings" (2 Kings 5:23) might have been similarly generous to a captive who sent him to the right address.

The Deuteronomistic History which was compiled in the time of the Babylonian Captivity in the 6th century BCE[62] had pointed out in the Elisha stories in particular how hard it was in these times to be a female and to be on one's own, to be a captive. Spyri's story from the 19th century CE does not fight against the hardships for females but takes them as God-given. The widow Brigitta, the late goatherd Peter's wife, cannot provide her blind mother with as much as an appropriate bed or a shawl to keep her warm in winter. But she bears her fate in silence. So for Spyri the utmost that can be done for a female is to provide for her future as the doctor and Heidi's grandfather do. But the price has to be paid by the girl Heidi: no further education, no personal happiness, no self-determined life. The model for this life is nursing, nurturing, healing. Under certain circumstances this can a noble model, indeed, but I suggest that it should be a model for both, man **and** woman.

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61 Ngan, 594.

62 Otto Gert, ed., *Sachkunde Religion* I (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1984), 31f.
F.L. Cross et al., ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 396.

Heidi's way from her "captivity" in Frankfurt ended up with being provided for by the doctor and her grandfather. We learn nothing about a possible end of captivity of the Hebrew enslaved. The question remains whether there is another form of "captivity" which might link both of the girls, the question of a "theological captivity." We can answer this question for Naaman's slave girl. Her master had experienced and confessed in public "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel" (2 Kings 5:15). This confession certainly will have ended the theological captivity for her in a house that used to worship in the house of Rimmon (v. 18). As Ngan stated above: "She is no longer the lone Yahweh worshipper in Naaman's house."

But what about Heidi? Spyri's pietistic upbringing, that carried with it a particular mode of Scriptural interpretation, is certainly to be traced both in *Gritli's Children* and *Heidi.* Her rigid and guilt-ridden portrayal of the "good God" is crippling for all, children and adolescents, as well as adults. From that point of view her novels are suppressive. Whereas Naaman's slave girl probably found some sort of theological liberation due to the fact that her master was healed, there is no liberating theological message in Spyri's novels. The "good God" remains the ambiguous and therefore threatening God of patriarchy. It would need a new message to liberate both Gritli's Children as well as Heidi. This message cannot be that of a God acting like a policeman:

> That was a wicked deed [Peter's getting rid of Klara's wheel chair]...You see, whoever does a wicked thing and thinks no one knows about it is always mistaken. The dear Lord sees and hears everything, and as soon as he notices that a person wants to conceal his wicked deed he quickly awakens a little watchman, that was placed in him at his birth, and that sleeps in him until the person does something wrong. And the little watchman has a little goad in his hand with which he continually pricks the person so that he has no rest for a moment. And with his voice he also torments him further, by constantly calling to him in a

> torturing way: 'It will all come out! You are going to be punished!' So he lives in continual fear and trembling, and is no longer happy, not a bit.[63]

Here we find the perpetuation of ideas about a Christian education similar to those of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's in his poem *Die wandelnde Glocke (The Walking Bell).* This poem, which I hated in my childhood, describes a child "who never took the trouble to go to church."[64] So the child's mother threatens that "the bell will come and fetch you." The child, who very reasonably judges: "the bell is hanging up there in the belfry," does not care and goes into the fields as it always does. But then "the bell comes wobbling," and the poor child in sheer terror hastens to church. From now on it will follow the bell's peal immediately. The interesting fact is that in this poem Goethe combines mother and bell: "The bell, bell, does not sound any longer/ The mother did not lose time./ But what a terror! Behind [the child] the bell comes wobbling." It is as if the bell is obedient to the mother's threatening. Exactly the same threat is expressed in the above quoted Spyri-text, and the mother is transformed into grandmother Sesemann. The fact that even I as a child of the 20th century experienced a slight terror in connection with this poem proves that I must have been threatened with the same text myself.

The new and liberating message could be the one that Rita Nakashima Brock provides:

> Christian theologians have stepped back from their nineteenth-century optimism about human nature to a stronger emphasis on the pervasiveness of human sin and on the need for us to acknowledge our sinful state and responsibility for evil. …Sin emerges because our relationships have the capacity to destroy us and we participate in destruction when we seek to destroy ourselves or others. Hence sin

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63 Spyri, 348f.

64 Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Die wandelnde Glocke*, in Beate Pinkerneil, ed., *Das große deutsche Balladenbuch.* (Königstein/Ts: Athenäum, 1978), 107.

> is a sign of our brokenheartedness, of how damaged we are, not how evil, willfully disobedient, and culpable we are. Sin is not something to be punished, but something to be healed.[65]

The healing aspect that the "landscapes of the soul" in *Heidi* provided had to be enlarged by this aspect of sin as "brokenheartedness" in order to bring liberation and support. Children all over this world are a prey to abuse and violence already, they should not be threatened by stories of punishment and revenge which pretend that they are written for "children and for those who love children."

The question arises whether these ideas are limited to Switzerland and Germany only or whether they have to be seen in a wider context. In order to decide this it is important to have a look at the origins of European tract literature for children.

Hesba Stretton and the Religious Tract Society

European fiction for children and adolescents of the 19th Century was highly influenced by the British Religious Tract Society.[66] This society "*had a formidable effect* upon nineteenth century writing for children, and its influence extended well into the present century, not only in Britain, but in America, in the dominions, and in *Europe* where the *works of many English Evangelical tract tale writers were well known in translation.*"[67]

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65 Rita Nakashima Brock, *Journeys by Heart: A Christology of Erotic Power* (New York: Crossroad, 1998), 6f.

66 I am indebted to Dr. Verena Rutschmann, Zürich, Schweizerisches Jugendbuchinstitut, for this.

67 Margaret Nancy Cutt, *Ministering Angels. A study of Nineteenth-century Evangelical Writing for Children* (Wormley, Herts.: Five Owls Press, 1979)[italics mine]. – I am indebted to the English Faculty

The Religious Tract Society (RTS) was founded in 1799 for missionary purposes. "It was intended to be an evangelical, non-denominational society dedicated to printing and distributing tracts…By the late 1820s, it was a publisher of religious periodicals, children's books, and collected sermons as well as tracts, and its publications were circulated in Great Britain and overseas… their significant contribution to late nineteenth-century children's publishing including the *Boy's Own Paper*, the *Girl's Own Paper* and numerous books by Hesba Stretton…"[68] Its products were "published in 200 languages."[69]

The most successful author to write Evangelical tract fiction was Sarah Smith alias "Hesba Stretton" (1832 – 1911). Her novel *Jessica's First Prayer* (1866) was to be "translated into every *European* language and most African and Asiatic tongues."[70] The author derived her name by using the initials of her siblings and herself: **H**annah, **E**lizabeth, **S**arah, **B**enjamin, **A**nna = Hesba and adopted her "surname" from the place where she and her family had lived.

"In twelve years she became the chief writer of tract fiction for the Religious Tract Society. She had hoped however, to be the female Dickens, a second Mrs.

Library, St. Cross Building, Oxford, GB, who kindly provided me not only with this book but copycards as well.

[68] Aileen Fyfe, Dept. History, National University of Ireland, Galway. www.ucg.ie/history/fyfe/research. html. 19/01/02.

[69] F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1381.

[70] *The Concise Dictionary of National Biography* (Bath: Oxford University Press, 1995), vol. III, 2781 [Italics mine].

Gaskell… But her experience was limited… She insisted on writing Christian melodrama."[71]

Stretton shares a number of characteristics with her *Swiss* contemporary, Johanna Spyri (1827 – 1901): both of them liked travelling, Hesba Stretton favored Italy and *Switzerland*, Spyri travelled around Switzerland and Italy, as well. Both of them tried to maintain their respective privacy as much as possible: "privacy was almost a mania with them [the Strettons],"[72] and Johanna Spyri reclaimed her own letters from her friends in the later days of her life in order to prevent the writing of any biography. Both of them were interested in children: Stretton helped to found the London Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children in 1884, in 1875 Spyri was elected "to the women's commission of the lyceum…, in 1879 to the board of governors. Here she attends courses for women and looks after pupils."[73]

Spyri's first narrative *Ein Blatt auf Vronys Grab* (*A Sheet on Vrony's Grave*)[74] is clearly *tract* fiction. Regine Schindler emphasizes this in her essay "*Form und Funktion religiöser Elemente in Johanna Spyris Werken*,"[75] when she quotes Dieter Richter and his judgment about pastor Cornelius Rudolf Vietor: "In his intention to distribute religiously elevating tract literature in Bremen in order to oppose the enlightened – liberal tendencies

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71 M.N. Cutt, 116.

72 Ibid., 116.

73 Barbara Helbling, Verena Rutschmann et al., ed., *„Dabei erzählen Sie so resolut..."* Johanna Spyri 12. Juni 1827 – 7. Juli 1901. Texte und Materialien zur Ausstellung (Zürich: Johanna Spyri-Archiv, 2001), 53 [translation mine].

74 [Joh]Anna Spyri, *Ein Blatt auf Vronys Grab* (Bremen: C.Ed. Müller, 1883). [The German word 'Blatt' has two different meanings: 'leaf' and 'sheet'. The entrance sentence of this narration is: „Ich will dir ein Blatt auf dein Grab legen, vielleicht liest es Einer".(I want to put a sheet on your grave, perhaps someone will read it.)].

75 Regine Schindler, *Nebenan. Der Anteil der Schweiz an der deutschsprachigen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, ed. Schweizerisches Jugendbuch-Institut (Zürich: Chronos, 1999), 173-198.

of the time pastor Vietor found resonance in the conservative pietist circle of the Zurich families Spoendlin, Spyri, and Heusser."[76]

Vrony's story already includes the main topics of *Heidi*: 1. an unusual, orphaned child – here the half-orphan Vrony; 2. first traces of the "landscape of the soul" (pp. 10, 15, 22); 3. the "missionary child" complex (as Heidi converts her grandfather, so the suffering and finally the death of the adult Vrony will convert her abusive husband). 4. Again Spyri uses a song by Paul Gerhardt to illustrate the atmosphere, (here: Ich lag in schweren Banden/ Du kommst und machst mich los [I lay in heavy bonds/ You come and set me free]). 5. Even the "Mignon traces" Bettina Hurrelmann refers to with regard to *Heidi* are there: the desire for a warm country with sunshine, red flowers and yellow fruits, although not lemons but apples (p. 15f.)

The difference from *Heidi* is the distinct knowledge the teenager Vrony has concerning her goal in life: "I want to be happy…Yes, yes, it is my greatest wish, I want to become like those who are happy. I want to have a great happiness in my heart which will never cease."[77] But of course such a distinct knowledge in a female has to be erased. Vrony will marry a young carpenter against whom everybody had warned her, since he "had haughty manners and such wild, black eyes that everybody was afraid of him."[78] He is the "other", the unknown, the outcast, so it is hubris to marry someone like him, and the punishment is to follow. Whereas in *Heidi* the outcast-grandfather returns to society thanks to his grandchild, the adult Vrony has to pay with her life for the attempt to escape from her unkind, narrow, and cold circumstances, personified by an unloving father and

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[76] Ibid., 179f. [translation mine].

later by an abusive husband. She dies from being beaten up by her husband who turns out to be a drunkard and gambler, but nevertheless will be rescued by the sufferings of his dead wife.

The message is distinct: Women (the adult Vrony) and girls (Heidi) are there to save men. With regard to Vrony this message is particularly underlined by the authority of the church, when its representative, the pastor, sends the battered Vrony back home to her abusive husband, telling her: "Now go home to your husband, and when his wrath breaks loose again, so fold your hands and continually pray in your heart: And lead us not into temptation! Take out your bible again and attend church on Sundays, you don't know what you may gain by this."[79] Although this pastor tells Vrony "Your husband has done you highly wrong," yet he convinces the protection seeking woman: "Look, Vrony, you must not escape your husband but yourself, otherwise you cannot find peace."[80] The fact that this pastor is depicted as a kind and even "compassionate" man makes this sort of message intolerable: The victim has to endure the pains in order to gain her place in heaven, whereas the doer has to be rescued on earth, thanks to her suffering. To connect all this with the Lord's prayer is a misuse of the bible as well. According to this tract by Spyri it is women who have to suffer on earth, not men.

That the attitude of the representative of the church is still valid until today is seen in a report my fellow student Mabel Katahweire [D.Min. of 2001] gave:

> I came across a woman who knew that her…husband was infected [by HIV/AIDS] and she wanted to get out of that marriage, so she went to talk

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77 Spyri, *Ein Blatt auf Vronys Grab*, 18, [translation mine].
78 Ibid. 20, [translation mine].
79 Ibid., 45 [translation mine].
80 Ibid., 44 [translation mine].

> to her pastor and the pastor said, "You can't do that! You made vows in health or sickness, you have to stay with your husband." And this woman told me, "This was between life and death and I didn't want to die…I got out of the marriage but I was stopped from having Holy Communion. I was punished for leaving my husband, for breaking the vows."[81]

It is the same pattern: "You have made vows"…Again it does not interest the priest that the woman's life is endangered. But luckily this African woman was no Vrony and did not act obediently.

It seems very likely that Spyri was familiar with the publications of the Religious Tract Society. Her mother Meta Heusser belonged to a new pietist revivalist movement, which was connected with the Basel Missionary Society. There were close links between the Methodist Movements in Great Britain and Germany. That the Religious Tract Society's weekly paper, the *Girl's Own Paper*, was read in German speaking countries I discovered when looking through their *Girl's Own Annual*, a collection of the weekly magazines into an annual volume. The volume contains the answers to letters written to the editor by young women. One of them was addressed to a Ms. Annie Eilles, Mühldorf, Bavaria (Germany).[82] The magazine therefore clearly was read on the continent. So, many of the religious ideas Spyri had, probably were the general property of her time. On the other hand it is astounding how little Spyri referred to the deplorable social state of affairs of her fellow countrymen and -countrywomen and that she never intended to look for remedies for those grievances. Spyri spent the final years of her life in Zurich: "She cares for young girls all the time, but otherwise lives very remote, totally absorbed with

writing. She does not seem to have shared the social and political questions of the town very much."[83] This distinguishes her greatly from Hesba Stretton who was highly interested in any social questions and depicted the situation of girls in the slums of Great Britain very accurately. This she shares with another well-respected European authoress of religious children's and adolescents' literature, the German Ottilie Wildermuth (1817 – 1877).

Religious Children's and Adolescents' Literature in Germany: Ottilie Wildermuth

In South Germany, in Suebia, Ottilie Wildermuth had become a much-represented and well read author for children's and girls' books of her time.[84] She, too, issued a magazine for adolescents, "*Der Jugendgarten*"(*Garden of Youth*) [since 1870], another characteristic she shared with the British Stretton.[85]

Ottilie Wildermuth belonged to an educated middle-class family. Her father was a judge with a wide literary knowledge. He collected paintings and cultivated roses. Ottilie received an education customary for girls of her century. She attended the local primary school, but started learning Latin with her oldest brother. Her relative Rosemarie Wildermuth describes her as "curious … and thirsty for education, ever since she was a

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81 Mabel Katahweire, "AIDS, Economics, Gender And Racism," *Witness Magazine*, vol. 86, Number 1/ 2, Jan/Feb 2003, 20-24.

82 *The Girl's Own Annual* (London: Paternoster Row, vol. XV-No.722, Oct. 28, 1883), 63.

83 B. Helbling. V. Rutschmann, 39 [translation mine].

84 Maria Pfadt, *Außenseiterfiguren bei Ottilie Wildermuth. Beispiele aus ihrer Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, in *Beiträge zur Landeskunde*. Regelmäßige Beilage zum Staatsanzeiger für Baden-Württemberg. No. 4, August 1996, 1[translation mine].

85 Gustav Sichelschmidt, *Liebe, Mord und Abenteuer. Eine Geschichte der deutschen Unterhaltungsliteratur*. (Berlin: Haude & Spener, MCMLXIX, 200f) [translation mine].

child she read a lot: Körner, Schwab, Uhland, Lenau [Suebian authors], Walter Scott – and detective novels as well, which were forbidden. In Stuttgart [the capital of Suebia] Ottilie completed courses in dancing, sewing, and cooking, obligatory for a daughter of the better circles, … in Tübingen she learned English."[86] Later on she made translations from French books, and learned Italian and Spanish. She deeply deplored her lack of a methodical education: "How I thirsted for an intellectual exchange, for instruction. And what vulgar blokes I always had to deal with. No wonder that I quarrelled with them and that they could not stand the sight of me. What might perhaps have become of me if my intellect had not gone to waste!"[87]

Although Ottilie Wildermuth was the first woman to receive a "Gold Medal for Arts and Science" by Württemberg's King Karl,[88] she never really left behind the traditional woman's role. At the age of 26 – late, at a time when the preferred age for a woman to marry was 18 – she married a teacher of modern languages, Dr. David Wildermuth. She gave birth to five children, two of whom died shortly after their birth. Three children survived, Agnes, Adelheid, and the son, Hermann. The qualities of her own mother, Eleonore Rooschütz, are mentioned by Rosemarie Wildermuth only in connection with the large Wildermuth household in Tübingen, where guests were always welcome. Eleonore helped Ottilie to get along with the manifold expectations of a large household.

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86 Rosemarie Wildermuth, *Ach, die Poesie im Leben. Ottilie Wildermuths Briefwechsel mit ihrem Sohn Hermann, 1865-1877* (Pfullingen: Neske, 1979), 13[translation mine].

87 Ibid., 2 [translation mine].

88 M. Pfadt, 1 [translation mine].

Ottilie's correspondence with her son Hermann (who, according to his parent's wishes attended the Evangelical-Theological Seminary in Urach), in combination with her memoirs in the 'house chronicle', gives a very intimate report. It shows us a highly conscientious mother, well read (she is able to support her son not only in questions of literature, but criticises his spelling which she explains to him by showing the respective etymological roots of the words). So she writes to him when he spoke of 'placed' Englishmen where he meant 'blasé': "Placed is derived from place and means ..'settled', condescending [in German: 'blasiert'] is derived from the French blasé, originally Greek blaxin (?)= corrupt, damaged. You expose yourself to ridicule by using foreign words wrongly."[89] She shows a sense for humor, when she remarks to the poet Justinus Kerner in 1857: "I believe I only write because the booksellers plague me ... Booksellers have ordered books from me in such detail as they would make an order to a seamstress." [90]

She clearly dinstinguishes between the different gender roles of parents when she comments: "Between father and son there are old roles existing with many variations, which is very frequently the mother's lot,"[91] meaning that mothers have to smooth the ground emotionally, so that fathers finally can step onto it. But her main concern is her son's spiritual well-being. "Don't forget to view your own heart and life, don't forget to pray and if you cannot help it, pray like the blessed Francke [Hermann August Francke, 1663-1727, German Pietist and educationist], who in moments of highest afflictions cried: 'O God, if you are there, make yourself manifest to me!' God enables the upright

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89 R. Wildermuth, 150 [translation mine].
90 M. Pfadt, 1 [translation mine].
91 R. Wildermuth, 11 [translation mine].

to be successful."[92] She and her husband destined their son for the priesthood and she is deeply upset when the son refuses point blank to become a pastor, quitting the seminary in order to become a physician. Although she is deeply worried she tells Hermann: "I and the dear father will be far from forcing you into a profession which above all has to be taken from the bottom of one's heart..."[93] And she herself takes refuge in prayers

> Give light and truth from above
> So that I will not rest and insist
> On my own will.
> Be thou a friend and faithful counsellor
> To complete what is good.[94]

Ultimately Hermann did indeed become a physician, a doctor for psychiatry and neurology. He was a celebrity, and his fame resulted in invitations to New York because of his skills. But the influence of his mother, who died shortly before he was able to finish his studies, is still traceable. In 1890 his unmarried sister Adelheid and he founded the *Ottilienhaus*, a psychiatric clinic for women and children. And even the choice of his wife betrays the strong bonds to his mother. He is to marry Meta Glitsch, daughter of a family who belongs to the movement of the Moravian Brethren, a group which solely depends on God's word.

Ottilie Wildermuth's letters are unique documents. Martin Kazmaier calls them the "art of letter-writing in the dressing gown," [95] because all the letters went in baskets with the washing Ottilie sends her son for four years. The letters show "no narrow but a

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92 Ibid., 42 [translation mine].
93 Ibid., 156 [translation mine].
94 Ibid., 221 [translation mine].
95 Ibid., 9 [translation mine].

rigorous conception of life."[96] This rigorous view of the world will be part of her own literary writing, which never conceals social grievances, but whose main concern always was the salvation of the human soul. This is reflected in Wildermuth's novel, excerpted and analyzed below:

Der Peterli von Emmental (Peterli of Emmental)

Contents

Peterli is the son of a well-known mountain guide in the Swiss Alps. His mother died when the son was a little boy. Although his father earns enough money during the summer months as a highly experienced (though reckless) mountain guide, he is unable to manage financial affairs. So the little boy is used to times of great hardship. Peterli never gets a regular education. His only source of knowledge and company is Mareili, the crippled daughter of a widowed peasant neighbor. Peterli's father dies during a highly dangerous climb which promised to make a lot of money. The orphaned boy is given to a farmer who is only interested in Peterli's faculty as a farm laborer, but not as a person.

By chance Peterli makes the acquaintance of two German professors, a biologist, and a mineralogist. They offer him a job as an apprentice when they realize that he is very gifted in both their subjects. Peterli accepts and leaves Switzerland. In Germany, the two professors decide to give him a proper education and let him attend their local university. As the young man is overwhelmed by his own abilities which he grossly over-estimates and as he makes the wrong friends, he nearly fails and gains a very low degree,

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96 Ibid., 10 [translation mine].

just sufficient to study medicine. Full of shame he leaves Germany and becomes a doctor for poor people in his former Swiss mountains. He marries a young woman and takes his old friend Mareile into his household. By sheer coincidence the two German professors happen to meet him, and Peterli is able to convince them that he has made his particular way in life, although he did not succeed in making a career as a famous scientist.

Der Peterli von Emmental – Heidi: A Comparison

Unlike Johanna Spyri who starts her novel *Gritli's Kinder* with a description of a make-belief idyllic garden, Ottilie Wildermuth opens her novel with Peterli's genealogy. Peterli's grandfather used to be a chamois hunter who died in the mountains (just as later his son Sepp, Peterli's father). Sepp is a widower without relatives and friends, he does not even have any direct neighbors. So the child Peterli is not born into a functioning social system. In that respect he equals Heidi, whose grandfather is a social outcast as well. But contrary to the Alm uncle who is reliable in his relationship towards Heidi, who can manage economically, Peterli's father lives hazardously, and this not only in his economic circumstances: "With Sepp … there was always either excess or scarcity… and he.. never learned how to budget the good money he earned."[97] At the same time he loves taking risks: "He was enthusiastic about climbing even the highest mountains… In Sepp there was his father's blood who had been the most … audacious mountaineer."[98]

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[97] Ottilie Wildermuth, *Eine seltsame Geschichte* [This narration is not by Wildermuth but by her daughter Agnes]/ *Der Peterli von Emmental* (Reutlingen: Enßlin & Laiblin, n. d.), 68 [translation mine].

Like Heidi, Peterli does not receive a permanent education: "After Christmas he attended school… He was taller than most of the schoolboys and far more ignorant. So he was laughed at."[99] Luckily the old schoolmaster is a friendly man and no Fräulein Rottenmayer. He coaxes Peterli into distinguishing between the single letters. But times change when, following the death of the old teacher a new one arrives who is not interested in Peterli's education.

Similarly to Heidi in Frankfurt, Peterli is not encouraged by his teachers, the main education authorities. The sour farmer for whom he herds the goats is dissatisfied with the boy. The farmer's favorite phrase is "unnecessary." For him it is "unnecessary" to send the boy to school during the summer months, like Peterli's namesake, the other goatherd Peter in Spyri's *Heidi*. If Peterli delights in stones and plants of which he has an astonishing knowledge, this is "unnecessary," too, and even when he succeeds in keeping the kitchen garden of the farmer's wife in neat order, this is "unnecessary" as well.

Peterli's sole support is Mareili. She is the crippled only daughter of a poor widow. But unlike Peterli she is embedded in a loving family. Mother and brothers care for her and provide her with food: "Before the mother went into the fields [as a laborer] or the boys to school, Mareili had to have her big share [of food], otherwise they had rather gone without food for themselves."[100]

But, from the outset Mareili works in her own. She knits, or weaves straw, and when the adolescent Peter later comes to say farewell to her, she is proud to have money

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98 Ibid., 72 [translation mine].

of her own: "I have started embroidering and do wreaths for the deceased as well, this will always make a handsome sum."[101] Although Mareili never received a proper schooling herself, she learned through her brothers and her mother to such an extent, "that her mother often wondered how the girl had got her knowledge."[102] When, as a grown-up, Peter opens his own surgery, it is Mareili who becomes a stronghold in his family as well. She is the main source of education for the doctor's children and as she taught Peterli once, she teaches his children by telling them stories. But unlike in Spyri's *Gritli* she is no "mother Clarissa" telling dismayed mothers that their ailing children are best kept in heaven. On the contrary: "Although Mareili still is looking forward to heaven, she often says she had never believed that things could be well for her in this world, too."[103]

This is the main difference between Spyri's message in *Gritli* and Wildermuth's in *Peterli*. Wildermuth does not design an artificial heaven to substitute an incomplete and cruel world, her figures live in this world and make it habitable.

There are those who fail, for example Berno. Berno is a "student who turned out badly, who has cheated his poor mother … out of her belongings and has gone through his time by drinking without ever passing a single examination."[104] Berno, the swindler, nearly drags Peterli into his own demise. When Berno decides to go to America as a

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99 Ibid., 81 [translation mine].
100 Ibid., 69 [translation mine].
101 Ibid., 96 [translation mine].
102 Ibid., 70 [translation mine].
103 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].
104 Ibid., 101 [translation mine].

quack, Peterli first wants to accompany him, drawn in by the "splendor of the New World, the effortlessness of the path they intended to follow."[105]

The change in Peterli's conscience is brought about by a mountain tour which Peterli takes on his own as Berno and his friends are still asleep after a night of excesses. The description of the landscape is comparable to Spyri's, although it does not reach the bewitching quality of Spyri's "landscape of the soul": "Far away the lake was shimmering in the moonlight…There the sun rose, light and clear like a pure flame, beneath the distinct mirror of the lake, around him [Peterli] the wreath of the Bavarian Alps, and above all that wonderful scent from afar, which again and again renews the words: 'And God's spirit swept over the face of the waters'."[106] This is the counterpart of an earlier landscape description in which Peterli was placed when he was still a goatherd: "Deep down was the dark green lake, little white sailing boats glided over it, from afar comparable to white doves. Mighty mountains mirrored in its calm floods. Close to the banks there stood friendly, bright villages, here and there a lonely little chapel; infinitely the mountains spread and high above them the mysterious glaciers towered brilliant white into the deep-blue sky."[107] Both experiences, face to face a magnificent landscape are linked to their own epiphanies. The younger Peterli prays in view of this splendour, adoring God's creation and asks God for a place to live in it. The older Peter has abandoned the lesson Mareili taught him and had given up praying altogether. But here again he prays for a place to live in God's marvellous creation in exactly the same words.

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105 Ibid., 112 [translation mine].

106 Ibid., 115 [translation mine].

Contrary to Mrs. Sesemann in Spyri's *Heidi* Wildermuth never criticizes those who have left God; she accumulates evidence, among them the experience Peter had made that his scientists showed no interest in church and faith: " 'I don't attend a church,' he [the professor for Geology] said with a cool smile, 'but you may go, you'll find the way, just follow the others'."[108] And as the scientists don't have any consideration for Sundays, Peterli soon abandons his former custom and Berno manages to dismantle the remainder.

Just as Heidi's grandfather returns to the Father in Heaven (and therefore to faith), so the parable of the Prodigal Son can be applied to the adult Peter: "And Peter looked and gazed and his whole soul gazed as well; he felt surrounded by the air of his native country, and the cool, fresh breath of the morning took away on light wings what was blurred and impure, which had burdened his soul. There a child knocked again at the gates of the parental home and the angels in heaven delighted in it."[109] When later on Peter, the doctor of the poor, meets the two German professors again with whom he had not kept in touch, he refers to exactly that scenery again: "I cannot but tell you how much that morning in the mountains had transformed my heart. I had the impression that God himself looked at me out of the blue sky, and I was ashamed to the bottom of my heart, that I had taken to eat rinds where I could have lived as a child in the father's house."[110]

Peter makes it quite clear that even his decision to become a doctor for the poor is connected with his newly achieved faith: "...and if the Lord followed me, a lost sheep,

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107 Ibid., 85 [translation mine].
108 Ibid., 103 [translation mine].
109 Ibid., 115f [translation mine].
110 Ibid., 125 [translation mine].

until he fetched me from the mountain, how should I myself not be happy to follow the poorest and lowliest."[111] But at the same time the adult Peter has no illusions about those he wants to help. He does not glorify them, thus splitting them into the good poor and the evil wealthy. He calmly observes to his former benefactors: "It was a sour beginning… often I was told abominable lies and I nearly died from hunger."[112] Peter revisits a question he addressed to God as a boy: "If the dear God was so rich why were there so many poor and sad people in the world? …He was unable to understand this. 'If I was the dear God, I should give them beautiful houses in the surrounding mountains, and many cows."[113] As a boy he had concluded: "But now he thought of the story of the dear Savior who had come down from the beautiful, magnificent sky, he, quite poor as well. He was said to be now with the dear God and he would know all about the poor people of this world and would also think of a poor little boy."[114]

Although Wildermuth continually explores the never-ending connection between God and humans, yet her God is not the policeman Spyri depicted in *Heidi*. Here there is no one who threatens sinners and, above all, excludes them. The two atheist professors are not converted, they are not (and never have been) social outcasts. They acknowledge Peter's "cheerful faith and his peace with God. They liked to listen to him … and observed it was quite all right that, if he looked at life in that way, he should stick to it.

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111 Ibid., 127 [translation mine].
112 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].
113 Ibid., 86 [translation mine].
114 Ibid., 87 [translation mine].

Whether some of these seeds might have fallen into their hearts as well, it is the Lord of the harvest who will find out, in the end."[115]

The motto Ottilie Wildermuth once gave to her son: "God enables the upright to be successful," displays her own conviction. In her novel that motto is reflected in Peterli who becomes the much beloved doctor of the poor, (and who even finds a suitable wife). She does not only have means of her own but is willing to share his life with the poor, "... although she ... might have married a government official."[116] Even the crippled Mareili thrives in the light of that motto: Redeemed from living with strangers, she ends up the backbone of a doctor's household and "the little boys ...obey her almost even more than father and mother."[117] The righteous are justly rewarded, as Peter sums up: "He [the Lord] has often given me an enormous amount of work, but he has never been meagre with me; he has given me strength and patience, much gratefulness and human love, a peaceful home and children who turned out well."[118]

Georgine Lückhoff, a disciple of Jesus

This belief was shared by my much beloved grandmother Georgine, born in 1876, who was widowed in her forties, with two adult stepchildren and two teenage girls of her own. She had married her own uncle, 26 years her senior, in order to prevent his children having to grow up with strangers after their mother's death. She lost the privileges of a

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115 Ibid., 127f [translation mine].
116 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].
117 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].
118 Ibid., 127 [translation mine].

director's wife (my grandfather had been the technical director of a mine), she who had been Professor Sauerbruch's partner at table, who was known to Victoria Luise, daughter of the last German emperor. My grandmother, who had danced in Berlin's hotel Adlon, was literally cast into the depths of a poor widow. My grandfather had stood surety with his remarkable property to an acquaintance, and had lost everything shortly before his death. But Georgine lived by her faith. While she never had received any formal education, she acted according to her abilities. She let some rooms to students from "good families." She taught girls how to run a household, she rented the rest of her rooms to impoverished people from the high aristocracy, and thereby endeavored to prevent a loss of social standards.

For a woman of her time she acted highly unconventionally. Even when she was a "director's wife" she went to communists' meetings. She always sat in the last row, armed with an umbrella (in case of tumults). If she was asked why she went there at all, she answered that she wanted to be informed about their ideas. Later on, when she found herself behind the iron curtain, she made fun of the election system in the former GDR (which never provided a genuine choice), yet giving sandwiches to Soviet soldiers who passed her garden, because she found them malnourished. They, in a countermove, provided her with a letter in Russian (a language Georgine did not speak). This literally became her passport. Once, when she illegally crossed the border between the Soviet Zone and Western Germany to visit her two daughters in the West, she got caught and was imprisoned. In prison she remembered her letter and passed it to one of the commanders who cross-examined her. After reading the paper and inquiring about its

whereabouts they set her free. When my totally perplexed grandmother asked to know about the text, they grinned and translated: "This old woman has been kind to us. Be kind to her." My grandmother saw God's guidance behind events like these and certainly not her own kindness.

All her life long Georgine had to cope with precious little money, but she never gave anyone the idea of being poor. She might have been one of Wildermuth's figures. I shall never forget how on a Good Friday she read Christ's passion to us and had to stop, overwhelmed by her own weeping. It came to me like a shock to see my otherwise highly controlled and well-behaved grandmother (who would never display emotions of any kind) in such a state. Yet I shall remember her compassion and empathy for Christ's death for the rest of my life. For Georgine this Christ was not a figure from an old book, no, he was a living human being, suffering. Like Peterli she believed in the God of the poor who suffered with them and thereby set them free.

In Georgine's life God took first place and was above everything else. She believed that everybody had to do his or her duty, a belief she shared with Ottilie Wildermuth. But like Wildermuth's characters she showed sympathy with those who were unable to work and felt responsible for them. She fed beggars and hired a young woman(a mother of five children from a man she never wanted to marry). When my grandmother asked her why, she was given the astounding answer (much quoted in our family): "I find him too filthy for marrying."

None of the female characters in Ottilie Wildermuth's novel can be called emancipated, nor was Ottilie herself emancipated. The same applies to my grandmother.

Yet, although she spoke about women always having to take the road of subordination, she had freed herself from this for a certain amount of time. She never married again, although she remained a remarkably good looking woman all her life. She was excellent in running a household, but quite outspoken, a quality which does not recommend someone for marriage, even today. Wildermuth's motto "God enables the upright" could have been a motto for Georgine Caroline Ernestine, too – the poor woman who had to live with the feminized version of three male names.

German Tracts for Children and Adolescents

Helene Christaller *Die kleine Jüngerin* (*The little Disciple*)

Contents

The twelve year old Marie Jung belongs to a poor laborer's family. After her mother's early death her father remarried, but the stepmother is overwrought and hardly finds a good word for the girl. She makes the girl work far too much at home, looking after her smaller siblings, and never encourages her. The same applies to the often uncontrolled teacher who does not even hesitate to beat her. So Marie's only solace is the Sunday school, run by the pastor's adult daughter. When she learns about the love of Jesus Christ to all humankind, she decides to become his disciple. After many hardships in her family she tries to rescue her little brother when the house is on fire, saves the little one, but dies herself of the consequences of her rescue action.

The story belongs to a collection of *Erzählungen für unsere Jugend* (*Stories for our Youth*), which have been issued under the title *Christrosen* by Bruno Mehmke. He

himself is called the editor of the *Jugendfreund* (*Friend of theYouth*), of the *Jugendkraft* (*Strength of the Youth),* and of the *Weckstimmen* (*Waking Calls*). The topics of the various authors are clear: rescue from natural catastrophes by the grace of God; historical reports about education in former monasteries; being saved by a Christian hymn in times of trouble; critique on spoilt children or young future ladies-to-be; social grievances; and the mission in South Africa. None of the authors aspire to great literary achievements. It does not surprise, that they are are hardly read nowadays. But all of them deliver the same message: It is not anybody's station in life, nor his or her private circumstances, it is Christian discipleship that counts.

Die kleine Jüngerin

When little Marie learns about Jesus, the one key question that dominates the short span of her life remains is: "What would Jesus have done?" This question lets her suppress her personal reaction towards day to day events. When her little brother has stolen the one and only piece of meat from her, because she is late from Sunday school, she suppresses her own hunger and abstains from the wish to hit her brother, because "Jesus would not have hit his little brother because of this. And then the sauerkraut tasted much better than before and a silent joy entered her heart about the fact that she had acted as Jesus would have done in her place."[119] The same miraculous transfiguration from anger to happiness takes place when she is asked to look after her teething little stepsister on the same Sunday afternoon, so that her stepmother can go into the village. Marie's

first reactions are disappointment and bitterness, but again she asks: "Whether Jesus had acted that badly if he were to be in my position?"[120] So she continues singing all the songs from Sunday School to the infant sister and when the evening bell tolls "never ever had the little girl [Marie] been as happy as today…and when the first evening star alit on the dusky sky it was to her as if the eye of her deceased mother looked from above, and she [Marie] said: 'How happy I am that today I was like Jesus would have been in my place.'"[121]

This shameless exploitation of a human-made Jesus-construct is enriched with bible quotations, so for instance, when little Marie got her dress soiled by ink and the teacher is going to flog her, the twelve year old does not defend herself (by telling the teacher that her classmate Karl had kicked her, thus throwing the inkpot onto her dress), but takes comfort in the Messiah (Isaiah 53:5): "He was wounded for our transgressions," and offers the uncontrolled teacher her hands to be smacked. In the scene following the lashing, Karl, the agent of this misfortune, tells the teacher what really had happened. It does not occur to this teacher to apologize to Marie, whereas Karl asks to be given money to substitute the ruined dress. The boy does not ask for pardon by words but, in a highly evocative scene, hits himself. So the story's young readers are made familiar – if they did not know about it already – with the fact that smacking substitutes a proper dispute. To be whipped by the teacher, to be given the stick, was customary in my own primary school days and even at High School. My math teacher was famous for throwing chalk,

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119 Helene Christaller, *Die kleine Jüngerin* in *Christrosen. Erzählungen für unsere Jugend* ed. Bruno Mehmke (Stuttgart: Kommissions-Verlag von Holland & Josenhans, n. d.) Heft 82, 5 [translation mine].

120 Ibid., 6 [translation mine].

121 Ibid., 7 [translation mine].

bunches of keys and sometimes even ink pots. Everybody knew about this and certainly no adult would side with a child. The child was always at fault. In an exhibition about childhood experiences 1940 – 1960 in Essen the editor Mathilde Jamin speaks about this fact: "The reports of the male and female interview partners about their education indicate that post-war children often had to meet with insensitive parents, little understanding, and great harshness, as well as with mental and bodily cruelty."[122] One of the interview partners writes: "At school there was flogging; a [female] teacher boxed or beat the back with a ruler. 'Then it was justified,' the parents remarked at home."[123]

The *missionary child* who is described in Elsli (*Gritli's Kinder*), in Heidi (*part 2*) to a certain degree, as well as in little Marie, is a child who is denied her own wishes and emotions or worse – who will never know about their existence. This sort of child is a powerful instrument in the hands of adults. By making the missionary child an exemplary model for the education of girls, two goals are achieved at the same time: (1) patriarchy will be fortified, may it be in the appearance of a policeman-God, the father of the family or religious hierarchies. (2) The missionary little girl later on will become a wife, who is sure never to contradict, and always counts herself the last in the family, because the Jesus surrogate construct, used in these stories, certainly did the same.

In her book *Am Anfang war Erziehung (In the Beginning there was Education)* the Swiss psychotherapist Alice Miller stresses, "how gladly teachers become the

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[122] Mathilde Jamin, Frank Kerner, ed. *Maikäfer flieg...Kindheitserinnerungen 1940-1960* (Bottrop-Essen: Ruhrlandmuseum Essen und Verlag Peter Pomp, 2001), 15 [translation mine].

[123] Ibid., 148, K063 [K= Kindheit (childhood-object) Objekt].

successors of the fathers with regard to chastising the pupils and what profit they make to stabilise their own narcissistic ego," and that on the other hand "failure at school belongs to the few means one has to punish the teacher-father."[124] How dangerous it will be to develop a personality which orients itself according to the neediness of parents or others in general, Alice Miller shows in *The Drama of the Gifted Child*: "The adaptation to parental needs often (but not always) leads to the development of a 'would-be-personality' or of that which D. Winnicott describes as a 'false self'... The true self cannot develop and differentiate, because it can never be lived."[125] Both aspects are true for Marie. She shares her failure in mathematics with many girls, because mathematics was considered to be a typical male domain. To fail could mean to cry for help to the "united fathers".

Marie's story ends with her own death. When it becomes apparent that her little brother Hans is still in the burning house, the story reports of the following dramatic dialogue in Marie's soul:

> 'What would Jesus do?' it resounded in Marie's soul. 'No!' she cried aloud. .. Once again the question came pressing and serious: 'What would Jesus do?' The child clinched her hands on her heart in despair. To obey the voice – death, not to obey the voice – more than death; yes, worse, this she felt distinctly; this was a separation from Jesus, thereby she separated herself from Him. 'Oh, Jesus,' she said, trembling, 'I want to be yours until death.'[126]

To force a twelve year old child to such a decision is downright cruelty, especially when written in a children's story with the aim to influence children. The tale ends on an equally pompous note: "When Marie was buried ... she became a witness for the power of

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[124] Alice Miller, *Am Anfang war Erziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 198 [translation mine].

[125] Alice Miller, *The Drama of the Gifted Child* (Frankfurt/Main: 1979. Suhrkamp).

Jesus over human hearts; her life was a blessing, but her death shook up people so that they asked: 'Who is that upon whose word even children go to death?' But on her grave there lies a stone…: Here rests a disciple of Jesus, faithful in life as in death."[127]

Substituting the girl's own wishes and perfectly justified human reactions by a highly conspicuous Jesus-construct raises numerous questions. How is it that this sort of "discipleship" seems to apply mainly to women and girls? When even until today the Roman Catholic Church rejects the priesthood of women with the argument that Jesus had had only male disciples, how is it possible that the question of suffering primarily seems to refer to women and girls?

Marie's question: "What would Jesus do?" is echoed by a story by Chung Hyun Kyung to which Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza introduced me. In this story a Korean Sunday school teacher surrenders to the wishes of her highly aggressive husband by following the example of Jesus (who, after all, surrendered to his father's wishes, as well). The woman speaks of her old self as dying and a new self to be born. Schüssler Fiorenza points to this example as a way of interpreting the bible in such a patriarchal way that it leads to self-alienation and what Schüssler Fiorenza calls 'kyriarchal submission'.[128] By this she understands "the rule of the emperor/master/lord/father/husband over his subordinates."[129] The "self-alienated self" Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Alice Miller refer to and D. Winnicott's "false self" are

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126 Helene Christaller, 11[translation mine].

127 Ibid., 12 [translation mine].

128 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Gospel stories of Wo/men," notes from a Course at Harvard Divinity School, fall 2000.

congruent. Both can only exist in a world which was (and is) dominated by men who take an interest in the submission of women and girls. This submission is expressed in many church hymns about a "sweet Jesus" or a Jesus who, "meek and mild," should be an example to be followed.(This model, however, did not seem to exist for men.) They indicate that the church played and still plays an important role in establishing limitations for the work of women, their development and their expression of strength.

In her essay "Dusting the Bible on the Floor: A Hermeneutics of Wisdom" Rita Nakashima Brock warns against the use of biblical stories as raw models for human behavior. For her the bible is more complex , as it speaks in several voices from different points of view. Humans contribute their own social background, the stories of their ancestors, their personal experiences:

> The desire to make Jesus a raw model shares the same limitations. When Jesus becomes the model for human behavior, we must ask, "What would Jesus do in this situation?" This question leads us away from the complexities of our own experiences and feelings, which compel us to ask, "How do I feel now; how are others feeling; and what can I do to lessen pain and suffering and empower survival, justice, and wholeness?" The whole-making power of a story comes through its ability to mirror and therefore heighten our sense of reality. A story provides resonances, images for understanding the ambiguities and struggles for our own lives...[130]

To Brock the main goal should be to acquire wisdom: "The more we search for heroes and guidelines, the more we are interested in controlling behavior, rather than discovering insight, opening dialogue, and empowering wisdom."[131]

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[129] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus, Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (New York: Continuum, 1999), 14.

Again my grandmother is a good example for a female development which might have ended in authenticity but in reality provided a new bondage. Her once forceful faith changed into a more and more strict observation of Christian doctrines. She became the only worldly visitor who permanently lived in a home for deaconesses. Her life had practically become that of a religious. But instead of being liberated she was infected by the very narrow way the deaconesses observed. She criticised anything 'worldly' just as she watched the deaconesses doing it. On one of our rare visits – it was difficult to obtain a visitor's permission for the Soviet Zone and the later GDR – I remember that the fact I wore lipstick and make-up, as well as a short skirt (it was the time of Mary Quant's mini-skirts), seemed to be a genuine challenge for both the deaconesses and my grandmother. Anything that could be interpreted as "fun" or "worldly" happiness was strictly opposed. Unfortunately I could not discern a feeling of solidarity among the women themselves. When near the end of her life my grandmother lost her memory, they interpreted this fact by telling my shocked mother that it was God's punishment for my grandmother's once having been "Frau Direktor" (a director's wife). And to make matters worse, they pointed to one of their own deaconesses of similar age who died with a clear mind, a model of what they called "an end agreeable to God."

I don't want to belittle the difficulties these deaconesses had to meet with under a Soviet regime or a government guided by Soviet principles. But this had not brought about their solidarity as women. They still observed the old hierarchies: church versus lay

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[130] Rita Nakashima Brock, "Dusting the Bible on the Floor: A Hermeneutics of Wisdom," in *Searching the Scriptures. A Feminist Introduction* ed. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (New York: Crossroad Herder, 1993), 72.

[131] Ibid., 72f.

persons; those elected by God versus those who had to undergo a minor purgatory in order to subdue their worldly habits, even though they may have endeavored to lead model lives themselves.

The missionary children Elsli and Heidi, the little disciple [of Jesus], Marie, using them as models perpetuated an education of girls which led towards the subordination under the wishes and ideas of others. *Suffering* again is the lot of (mainly) women and is not questioned in its European background. The great model is the *suffering* but *loving* Jesus. Girls and women in particular are caught in the old *love* trap. Their yearning for love let them take St. Paul's words: [love] "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1Corinthians 10:7) as an iron law. We shall take a deeper look into the construct of *suffering* and *love* in the next chapter.

IV

EROS AND SEXUALITY IN 19TH CENTURY GERMANY

Eros, n [Gk *erōs* sexual love]: **2b**: aspiring self-fulfilling love often having sensuous quality

silly, adj **1a**: needing compassion or sympathy: PATHETIC **3b**: exhibiting a lack of judgment or intelligence: FOOLISH, INANE, VACUOUS

In the first part of this chapter I shall trace some of the roots for the upbringing of women and girls, in particular, focusing on the 19th century in Germany. I shall contrast Luise, Queen of Prussia, *the* great icon for females at that time, with Rahel Levin, who as a woman ran one of the first *salons* in the intellectual society of Berlin.

I shall show that economic security will be the topic for women of the 19th century and show this by the examples of *Heidi* and Johanna Spyri's niece Emily Kempin-Spyri. I shall give a look into the lives of farmers' wives and their daughters, compared to those belonging to the proletariat and will end with a cursory glance at today's Germany.

In a second part I shall analyze the *Silly Teenagers' Stories*, starting with Clementine Helm's *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden*.

I shall look at the topic of the *Poor Damsel in Distress* and illustrate it by means of a "legend" I wrote myself. I will try to find some answers to the question why even nowadays some women seem to be unable to leave the old pattern of domestication and how they could be helped by the insight women of color have to offer.

The second teenager book I analyze will be the great success story of Emmy von Rhoden's *Der Trotzkopf*. Again, the topic is domestication. Henny Koch's *Papas*

Junge is the third book in this series of *Silly Teenagers' Stories*. I shall contrast all the three novels and question their message.

Eros and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Germany

According to one of the most widely used German dictionaries for religion, *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart* (*RGG*), Eros denotes "a Greek term … which is translated by the term love… For Plato the term eros, as 'Divine Eros,' has become the main term for a view, according to which it is the main duty of humankind to free the soul from the ties of sensuousness in order to transport it towards a supra-sensuous, divine world."[1] Wahrig's *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, an etymological dictionary of the German language, gives two definitions: "sensuous love; (philosophical) drive for knowledge and creative, spiritual work."[2] I intend to use the word according to Wahrig's first definition and not in the narrow and refined sense of the *RGG* definition.

German nineteenth century history is very much coined by the French Revolution, a revolution that inspired with great hope the many small fiefdoms, principalities and kingdoms of the German nation prior to its first unification, in 1872. Their hopes and expectations, however, were never fulfilled. There had to be a "German Revolution," 1848 - 49, which "reached the population… in the smallest village community… It impressed those who reigned... by its solidarity, uniformity,

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1 Hans, Frhr. von Campenhausen et al., ed., *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1986), 603 [translation mine].

2 Gerhard Wahrig, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, (Gütersloh: Mosaik Verlag, 1985), 1168 [translatio mine].

and dynamism."[3] The ensuing epoch of reactionary policies, however, has convinced quite a number of historians that this revolution failed. Nevertheless, both the ideas of the French Revolution as well as the Revolution of 1848/49 had become fully established thoughts in the minds of the upper bourgeoisie.

With a fragmented German nation for a long period of time consisting of numerous small states, with a population that, at times, was still considered to be made up of immature citizens by the leading authorities, I can only investigate the question of Eros and Sexuality with regard to particular groups. Among those groups, I intend to focus especially on women and girls. Since the state system with its social class distinctions was still in use, I will examine the position of women of aristocracy, the bourgeoisie, farmers, and working classes with regard to Eros and Sexuality, although with different emphases. I shall also focus on the role of the church in maintaining the prevalent class structure ands social expectations. Finally I am going to pose the question whether there was any form of liberation for women in those days.

The great icon of female Eros in the nineteenth century was Queen Luise of Prussia. Apart from this she became an example of every possible virtue. She remained a standard for her own class and for members of all other classes alike. People regarded her as a beautiful, natural, vivid woman that brushed away etiquette and preferred affection to class distinction. Luise was known as a *Queen of Hearts*

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[3] Wolfgang Siemann, *Die deutsche Revolution von 1848/49*. Lizenzausgabe für die Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1997), 17 [translation mine].



Josef Grassi (1758-1838): Königin Luise.
Queen Luise of Prussia.
Stiftung Preußische Schlösser und Gärten Berlin-Brandenburg,
Schloß Charlottenburg

long before Princess Diana of Wales was born. Poets praised her virtues. The key poet of German Romanticism, Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), wrote an essay about *Faith and Love Or the King and the Queen* praising her, and novelist Jean Paul dedicated his work *Titan* to her.

Although born in 1776 her reputation still extends into the twentieth century. To visit the monument to the dead queen, who died at the age of 34 years of a lung condition and a heart defect, was obligatory for thousands of young women. And when in 1958 my class visited Berlin, we certainly paid our respect to her monument in the park of Charlottenburg Palace. In 2002 it was President George W. Bush's wife Laura who paid her homage to this monument. Comparable to the late Princess Diana, Queen Luise's youthful death was part of her myth, but more so it was the way she had lived.

Luise had been born in Hannover (Northern Germany) which at that time was ruled in personal union with Britain. Her father was a governor of the city. At the age of 17 an arranged meeting had taken place with the Prussian Crown Prince, another similarity she shares with Princess Diana. But here all similarities cease. Both Luise and (the later) king Friedrich Wilhelm III fell in love and were married on Christmas Eve 1793. Two days later her younger sister Friederike followed suit, marrying Friedrich Wilhelm's unloved brother Ludwig. Both young women were unusual, beautiful, natural, of a happy disposition. But Friederike was supposed to be more attractive than her sister, who was seen as an example of virtuous behavior. When Friederike was widowed at the age of 18, she had love affairs and when, according to the prevailing rules of etiquette, she entered an imprudent marriage, she was forced to



Joh. Gottfried Schadow (1764-1850):
Doppelstandbild derPrinzessinnen
Luise und Friederike von Preußen
Double Statue of the Princesses
Luise and Friederike of Prussia
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-
Preußischer Kulturbesitz
Nationalgalerie

leave the Prussian court and was only entitled to return after another period of widowhood and her third marriage, making her Queen of Hannover. In their respective attitudes both sisters personified the social codes of their times, codes that reached beyond their own times into later centuries. The older sister Luise became *the* standard for an excellent wife. Her attraction was that of a mild and non-sensuous classicism. By marrying she left behind the once spontaneous girl with her a passion for dancing. Her sister, however, maintained all these qualities and so became the object of desire at a court where her husband still continued to live his former bachelor-life, including his sexual preferences, and showed little interest in her. She was forced to leave these surroundings when acting against the ruling etiquette, even though her sister was consort to a reigning king.

To marry because of love was something very rare in the circles of the high aristocracy of that time (as it seems to be even today). The mutual love of a couple of such high ranking added much to the construction of Queen-Luise-myths of later times. This queen was not only amiable and graceful, she also had a strong sense of duty. Married to a king who hated his father's voluptuous and pompous life-style, that included countless sexual affairs and reckless squandering, Luise became an example of Prussian virtues. She was thrifty, God-fearing, faithful to husband and God. She gave birth to children who, contrary to other houses of the high aristocracy, were not given away to nursemaids and nannies. Rather, she and her husband lived the life of citizens; they both delighted in their children. Luise was to become the mother of a nation, "mother of Prussia" when she met Napoleon who was adding a string of German vassal nations to his empire, and who hated and deeply humiliated her. She

wrote to him: "Sire, I am a wife and a mother, and both these features let me recommend Prussia's fate to you...I apply to your noble heart, and expect happiness from your majesty."[4] The historian Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann justly emphasizes: "This naïve letter corresponds with the woman's ideal of motherliness and at the same time virginal innocence, a life totally overshadowed by the male, in the security and restriction of her home."[5]

Although it was Luise who had once advocated a treaty with Napoleon's enemy Russia and had convinced her hesitating husband to wage war against the French emperor, her myth did suppress this trace — something probably regarded inappropriate for a woman — and transformed her into a mythical *sufferer*. A number of German films devoted themselves to this topic. When I was a school girl, a new Queen Luise drama brought to the screen queen: Luise fleeing Napoleon with her children. Its title, *Queen Luise. Love and* ***Suffering*** *of a Queen* underpins the two prevalent topics, even as late as 1957.

But the epitome of the Luise-myth may be what Günter de Bruyn called "The Prussian Madonna"[6]: "Even Schleiermacher had emphasized in his euloguy on the death of Luise that the queen had never crossed those borders which 'are set by the difference of the genders'. Her effectiveness had been a quietude of her mind. She had given happiness to the king and the royal children by supporting them in their

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4 Anonymous, *Große Frauen der Weltgeschichte* (Wiesbaden: n.p., n.d.), 302 [translation mine].

5 Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, *Frauenleben im 19. Jahrhundert. Empire und Romantik, Biedermeier, Gründerzeit* (München: Beck, 1988), 16 [translation mine].



Johann Heinrich Schröder (1796):
Luise Kronprinzessin von Preußen
mit ihrem Sohn Prinz Friedrich Wilhelm (IV.)
Crown Princess Luise of Prussia with her
son Prince Friedrich Wilhelm (IV.)
["The Prussian Madonna"]
Schloßmuseum Gotha
(Pastell)

domestic realm, by soothing and cheering them."[7] Here is no word about her breaching etiquette from time to time by embracing or greeting persons of lower ranks, or by shedding tears in public. Here she is fully established in a female role — the great sufferer, the supporting wife, the encouraging mother, the cheerful creature who never thinks of herself.

Most essentially, however, remained the fact that she had given birth to the later *Kaiser*, emperor Wilhelm I. In contemporary iconography she was presented as the mother of important children, a later king and a later emperor. One of them was "painted as early as 1796 in imitation of Rafael's *Madonna della Sedia* ... with her oldest son in her arms."[8] This was the Luise who was to become an exemplar for generations of German girls and young mothers. The almost prophetic words preached at her wedding by court chaplain Sack had been fulfilled: "[It is] your beautiful profession ... to kindle the gentle flame of tender emotions [in your husband] which mellows the horror of heroic virtues and, as it is love in itself, will engender love. The Prince for whom you vow to live, expects what dignity and power cannot give him, that is the sacred happiness of friendship — and a new, shining exemplar both court and country expect from you."[9] *Heroic virtues* were for the prince, *tender emotions* for the bride and the function of an *exemplar*-to-be. There was nothing for herself, but everything in response to her husband or, later on, with regard to her

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6 Günter de Bruyn, *Preussens Luise. Vom Entstehen und Vergehen einer Legende* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 2001), 71f. [translation mine].

7 Ibid. 71 [translation mine].

8 Ibid., 76 [translation mine].

9 De Bruyn, 27 [translation mine].



Peter Friedel (1800): Pastell der
Rahel Levin alias Friederike Varnhagen von Ense
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin –Preußischer Kulturbesit
Handschriftenabteilung

children and her future sons in particular. No passion was sought after but a *gentle flame*, *sacred friendship* instead of love or, if love, a love which is chaste (agape) and not linked with anything as dangerous as ardor. So she became Mother and Madonna, the fulfilment of many male dreams. This was indeed to become a model for many girls and women of the nineteenth century and beyond.

Five years before the birth of Queen Luise of Prussia, Rahel Levin, later Friederike Varnhagen von Ense, was born in Berlin. She was to become the most famous intellectual woman of her age, and in her literary salon assembled many important intellectuals of her time. Contrary to Queen Luise she was supposed to be neither beautiful, nor could she claim a noble birth. Quite the reverse, she was the oldest child of a Jewish businessman and banker. When her father died in 1790 she had no means of her own but was dependent on her brothers. Highly intelligent, she visited the lectures of August Wilhelm Schlegel in Berlin (1802) and, five years later, Ludwig Fichte's famous *Addresses to the German Nation*. She initially tried to overcome her Jewish heritage by assimilation, but soon found out that she could not cope with representing somebody else or, as Hannah Arendt, a Jew and German herself, puts it in her biography of Rahel Levin: "The omnipotence of opinion and of lie has its limit … one cannot transform one's face; neither intelligence nor freedom, neither lie nor disgust nor weariness help leaving one's own skin."[10] The only way to escape the constrictions of her class was by marriage. In 1796 she fell in love with Karl Count of Finckenstein, an affair which lasted for nearly four years. She separated

from him, because he could not comprehend her and, instead, fled back into the safe boundaries of his social class. In 1802 Rahel Levin fell in love with the Spanish legation secretary Don Raphael d'Urquijo. As a foreigner the fact that she was a Jew seemed not to matter. She wrote ardent love letters to him, speaking of eternal love, "a gift from heaven," the "strongest enchantment possible," "the incredible God-sent to show her soul." But d'Urquijo was not interested in either her soul or her boundless love. "Above all, it is not appropriate for a woman to love a man so much more than he loves herself."[11] Again she broke away. But, unlike other women, she had her salon. The journalist Carola Stern comments: "At Rahel Levin's the best and brightest of society assembled; this was not the good society, neither in the aristocratic nor in the bourgeois sense of the word."[12] Even Prussian Prince Louis Ferdinand was among the guests and played the piano for her. But she could not establish that sort of rapport. Again she tried to forge a relationship, this time with Friedrich Gentz, a womanizer of some notoriety. Both of them created a new form of understanding. With him she established roles; he suggested role-plays, "she the mother, he the child, he the old man, she the catamite."[13] But he was to betray her, as well.

In 1808, Rahel, then nearly forty, met a man fourteen years her junior, Karl August Varnhagen. He was the first man who saw her isolation and her deep inner loneliness. He was certainly not her equal in terms of intelligence; she, however, was looked at as an old maid with a number of affairs, humiliated, escaping into sickness.

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10 Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen. Lebensgeschichte einer deutschen Jüdin aus der Romantik* (München: Piper, 1998), 27 [translation mine].

11 Ibid., 104 f [translation mine].

12 Carola Stern, *Der Text meines Herzens. Das Leben der Rahel Varnhagen* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1997), 88 [translation mine].

It is the "small" love which Rahel Levin described: "There are many interim-forms of happiness, one has to use them as they are."[14] So she married the young man and lived with him until her death in 1833.

Both women, the Prussian Christian Queen Luise and the Jewish Rahel Levin, were exceptional women, and to me it is not surprising that they lived their unusual lives in the first half of the nineteenth century because the ideas of the French Revolution were still prevalent. But whereas Luise "would throw away all books in order to maintain her sensibility…May God prevent me from caring for my reason and neglecting my heart;"[15] knowledge was a natural desire for Rahel — although the cost she was to pay for being admitted to society was immense. She had to convert to the Christian faith in order to become the wife of a civil servant, and "as she neither wanted to be a fool nor a paradox, she left it to Varnhagen to really make her Mrs. Friederike Varnhagen von Ense, to extinguish her existence up to her first name."[16]

Rahel Levin's particularity consisted in the fact that she attracted people as diverse as Goethe and Heinrich Heine; both Jews and Christians, both aristocracy and bourgeoisie. But she became assimilated where, perhaps, she might have identified

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13 Ibid., 93 [translation mine].

14 Ibid., 143 [translation mine].

15 De Bruyn, 43 [translation mine].

16 Arendt, 219 [translation mine].

herself with other non-privileged people: "Economic security formed the main base of her sole, driven life."[17]

I shall encounter this dilemma again in the so-called *Silly Teenagers' Stories* of the second half of her century and in children's books like *Heidi*. The strange fact that Heidi's grandfather does not care for her further education after her return from Frankfurt but, rather, shows delight when the Frankfurt doctor proposes to let Heidi inherit his property but insists on her nursing him in his old age, can be explained in terms of the same dilemma. Economic security was the base for marriages in all classes of society of this century, a feature which reaches unto this century as well. And the rights for women had changed: "The Middle Ages justified a woman to appear before the court of law even in cases against her own husband. With the Prussian country law it was a step back to the proto-Germanic times where a woman only changed from one guardianship to another and in theory was not responsible for herself...making her husband her appointed guardian."[18] Under these circumstances there is little room for Eros and Sexuality, based on a partnership of equals.

Once more, Spyri's *Heidi* illustrates this fact well: There is not a single hint of any sort of love, let alone an erotic attachment. *Heidi*'s world is populated by bachelors and spinsters, widows and widowers. This clear lack of eroticism of any kind led to a peculiar "appendix" of *Heidi* in English-speaking countries and in

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17 Ibid., 188 [translation mine].

18 Barbara Beuys, *Familienleben in Deutschland. Neue Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1980), 339 [translation mine].

France: One of Spyri's translators, the Swiss Charles Tritten, wrote two continuations of Spyri's *Heidi*: *Heidi Grows Up* and *Heidi's Children.*[19] There are two interesting features: Tritten compensates what is lacking in Spyri's second half of *Heidi*, namely its want of education and eroticism. So he sends the girl Heidi to exactly that sort of finishing school described in the *Silly Teenagers' Stories*. He makes her marry goatherd Peter and lets her have two children. The second interesting feature consists in the fact that these books are known in France, but not in German-speaking countries. On the other hand they are widely published in English-speaking countries, even as far as Australia. Tritten makes use of his inside knowledge as a translator: "Was it prophetic, perhaps, that the last chapter of *Heidi* should have been entitled 'Parting to Meet Again'? Now, years afterwards … the curtain rolled back and we *do* meet again the little girl...", but at the same time is praised by the unnamed author of the foreword "for his [Tritten's] simplicity and understanding of young children embarked upon the breathless adventure of growing up."[20] Another book, again from the USA, is based upon the script of Fred and Mark Brogger's movie "Courage Mountain," a serial of *Heidi* describing her adolescence in an Italian finishing school with extremely melodramatic events. Again she will marry goatherd Peter, this time a brave young soldier.

The "breathless adventure of growing up" was unknown for Spyri, although she was reported to have traits of thinking independently and was also accused of social maladjustment: "Still Mrs. Town Clerk (her husband had been made town clerk of Zurich) has this temperament which grudgingly bows to considerations of

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19 Charles Tritten, *Heidi Grows Up/ Heidi's Children* (Hungary, n. p.: W.M. Collins, 1981).

society."[21] But this might have its reasons in the fact that she was perhaps not that much familiar with the "grand world" as for example Reiner Zerbst sees her: "Since then [the second edition of *Heidi*] she leads a thoroughly mundane life by going on vacation in Montreux. This, too, opposes the portrait of the author as a godfearing, pietist, who is a wrapt in her thoughts woman of the 19th century." [22] When I visited the Schweizerisches Jugendbuch Institut Dr. Verena Rutschmann told me that Johanna Spyri had had some emancipatory attempts. So she had left the pietist revival movement, had become a member of the supervisory board of the Zurich High School for girls, and in the last years of her life had attended a female doctor. Yet, she was unable to detect the incredible academic gifts of her own niece, Emily, and was totally incapable of supporting this young woman either intellectually or financially. Emily Kempin-Spyri was to be the first woman in Europe to graduate in law, but was neither permitted to act as an attorney nor to become a professor herself. So she left Switzerland with her family for America in 1888. Although the "Women's Legal Education Society" in the USA "called her lectures a landmark: The first modern instance of a woman lecturing on law to classes of young men,"[23] Emily failed because of a permanent lack of money, because of a family who was overstraining her continually, and because of a pastor-father who disinherited her as he was totally against her plans of marrying someone inferior to her family. She died in 1901, aged 48, in a lunatic asylum in Basel where she is still unknown even 90 years later.

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20 Charles Tritten. *Heidi Grows Up*, 13.

21 Eveline Hasler, *Die Wachsflügelfrau* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1995), 101 [translation mine].

22 Reiner Zerbst,"Heidi macht Urlaub in Montreux" in *Zeitzeichen* 7/2001, 49 [translation mine].

23 Eveline Hasler, 186 [translation mine].

Despite her education Emily Kempin-Spyri in a way embodies the many female lives in the 19th century including those which had no possibility to gain any education, achieve a station in life beyond that of a housewife, or make decisions of their own.

Spyri's educational example in *Heidi* comprises the experience of countless women in the nineteenth century. As Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann makes clear, it was dangerous to grow up: "Girls, frequently aged only 16-17 were married to men often twice their age in a 'safe position', and their naïve childlikeness established their special attraction …Because of such an unpretentious childlikeness, because of a staging of life which happily and almost infantile changed into the married stage, no learning was necessary and was not missed either."[24]

For J. C. Bluntschli, (1808-1883), a Swiss lawyer, a witness to the attitudes of the times, the woman he could love ought to have the following features:

> She seemed to me like the living ideal of femininity. Intellectual women who competed with men were inappropriate to me. But in her I found the the noblest traces of the spirit, a quick and clear reason, deep understanding a fine moral feeling mixed with loveliest grace, gentleness and mildness.Webe She was a faithful, caring wife, a good mother, a friend of the poor, ready to sacrifice herself, a housewife without pretension and a friendly and serene hostess. In her presence I felt elevated and purer…On no account I would like to have a wife who would be superior to me with regard to her intellect… The sharpness and strength of intellect will be a priority of men in eternity. There will always be a certain weakness in their [i.e. women's] intellect. Nevertheless women will always excel us by their delicate understanding and fine feelings. [25]

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24 Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, 56 [translation mine].

25 J. C. Bluntschli, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus meinem Leben* (Nördlingen: n.p., 1884), 156, quoted after Weber-Kellermann, 52 [translation mine].

Again the roles are clearly defined, *sharpness* and *strength of intellect* for men, *understanding* and *feelings* for women; and on no account passionate emotions, rather someone who is ready to *sacrifice herself* similar to the *Prussian Madonna* is sought after.

This catalogue strangely resembles that of Queen Luise of Prussia: *grace, gentleness, mildness* instead of passion and ardor, a *caring* wife, a *good* mother, ready *to sacrifice herself*, but with a *certain weakness of intellect*. It is the portrait of the "safe" woman, someone who will support her husband, never compete with him, someone who is satisfied to be put off with the praise of her *delicate understanding and fine feelings*, which becomes a trap in itself. If she wants to decide on her own, act according to her personal feelings and wishes, then her understanding will be lacking and is no longer delicate and fine. So it is best that she remains in the childlike state of her bridehood with no sexual enlightenment and an education just enough to support her duties as a graceful hostess, thus enhancing her husband's glamor. Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann is fully justified in commenting: "... the defenselessness of women, [is characterized by the effortless manner] with which they went from their father's hand or that of an educational institute, into that of a husband, without ever having achieved their own personal development."[26] *Marriage* in itself was the main goal and

> if they had achieved a contract of marriage a failure of this attempt was not supposed to take place. Therefore the attitude of devotion that many women had and their great strength in enduring sometimes even intolerable and humiliating conditions, particularly outwardly the impression of a happy marriage...had to be kept...This often was succeeded only by the women's silence...thus increasing their incapability to formulate personal

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26 Hildegard Weber-Kellermann, 97 [translation mine].

> matters and speak about them at all. Those continued repressed processes lead to neurosis and hysteria, the family related origins of which Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) discovered at the end of the century.[27]

Divorce was something stigmatizing and in general it ruined the women socially. The German portraitist of nineteenth century society, the poet Theodor Fontane (1819-1898), described divorce in a number of his novels. Not all the women he depicted were as "lucky" as the *Stechlin's* countess Melusine, sent on her honeymoon to Italy without any sexual education and, after passing the Apennine tunnel, would remark "I knew which misery I lived for in future."[28] Her divorce neither separated her from her family nor her class in general. How cruel this must have been for young women is depicted in Fontane's famous *Effi Briest*. Effi is married to an old suitor of her mother, and out of complete boredom and neglect runs into an affair and ends up paying for this long-forgotten story when her husband discovers the love letters of bygone times. When Effi is divorced, she is not even allowed to see her family anymore. Only when she is at the point of dying, her father pleads for her return, speaking of "parental love" to a wife for whom "catechism, morals and claims of society" have first priority: "It is very difficult to live without society" — "As it is to live without child," retorts her husband. [29]

As seen above, Rahel Levin had escaped into illness when she felt the effects of unrequited love and lack of social acceptance. Queen Luise was able to fall back on

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27 Ibid., 98 [translation mine].

28 Theodor Fontane, *Der Stechlin* vol. 4 (München: Hanser, 1982), 394 [translation mine].

29 Theodor Fontane, *Effi Briest* vol. 3 (München: Hanser, 1982) 705 [translation mine].

the love of her husband and her subjects. But even she had to live according to the strict rules of a patriarchal time. Neither Rahel nor Luise had to work for their living. Despite frugality they belonged to privileged classes. What possibilities were there for girls and women from other classes of society such as farmers or the working classes? How did eros and sexuality affect them? Did they have any choice, were they enabled to make decisions of their own?

Similar to aristocracy, as late as the twentieth century in Germany, marriages between farmers were often arranged marriages. Eros and sexuality were subordinated to claims of prudence and profit. In certain regions, like for example Bavaria, the proof of the woman's fertility played an important role. Marriages where the bride was already pregnant were no exception from the rule or stigmatizing, and virginity did not play the same role as it did in the upper classes. The parents of young farmers arranged their sons' or daughters' marriages either through their own families or friends, or with the help of marriage brokers. The prospective bride had to be healthy – in order to be a good laborer and child-bearer – as well as to be well-off. The question of beauty was of little importance. As farmers' daughters or working class young women did not write diaries in general (unlike those from the bourgeoisie class or aristocracy) there are, alas, only scarce personal documents to reflect on this.

When a wedding took place, the bride would have arrived with a carriage containing her dowry. She was also expected to have some extra money to support herself. The act of consummation of matrimony was almost a public act and left little room for Eros, tender feelings or great emotions. But contrary to women of the

aristocracy or those of the bourgeoisie, farmers' wives had a certain scope of duties. They were responsible for a functioning household as well as particular tasks like the rearing of and providing for animals. At harvest they supported their husbands, and their life was not marked by boredom or inactivity as that of the women of higher classes; indeed, any "escape" into illness was unheard of. Their lives were not easy, because they had to work hard. The poorer the farm, the more was expected of the farmers' wife.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the industrial revolution had changed the working process and effectiveness of many small farms. Quite a number of them had to give up. Some of the former farmers tried to find an occupation in the big towns, in the hope for a better future. The fate of many of these small farmers were to form the roots of a large proletariat, bringing with it substantial poverty and incredible misery. This was the time when women and children worked, for instance as miners; often for 10–14 hours a day, merely to survive. There was no room for Eros. A Belgian insight holds true regarding to the conditions in German mines, too:

> The mine is a school of immorality for women; young girls of 14 to 20 years are in continual contact with men and lads, the consequence of which are scandalizing scenes. The immoral attitudes are so deeply rooted with *women* who work in mines that it is impossible for them to get rid of them. Therefore the great number of unhappy marriages in this country...The poor girls who work in mines are hardly 15 years old and already lost. [30]

Here again it is only the women who are made responsible for the so-called immorality. These women and girls had neither choice nor possibilities for ruling their

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[30] Herbert Gutschera et al., *Brennpunkte der Kirchengeschichte* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1976), 197 f. [translation and italics mine].

own lives. They had neither education, money, nor any prospect of ever changing their status. On the contrary, the church played an important role to keep them in their respective places, to keep them "modest" which, in the end, meant to restrict them to their classes. According to the church the class system had been provided for everybody by God. So the very idea of change was already against the God-given order.[31]

A cookbook of 1881 starts with the admonition of a pastor. He tells the working-class woman that she alone will be responsible for the happiness of her marriage. He recommends attending the service every Sunday and tells her "to *endure* the faults of her husband patiently, even his visiting of inns, and it advises her to get more *peaceful and lenient*."[32]

Even here, under these gross circumstances, there is no word of solidarity or compassion, but again the emphasis on the role of the *sufferer* which I had pointed to in the catalogue of Queen Luise's virtues at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The claim for women's behavior as the 'sole source of responsibility for a happy marriage' speaks for itself. How anyone who had to cope with famine, impossible conditions of housing — in many urban flats two families had to live together to save cost, some of them sharing even one room (which had been 'separated' by a chalk mark on the floor) — how anyone could develop *peacefulness and leniency* under these circumstances is hard to understand, particularly when the man giving the advice himself belonged to the ruling classes: "Pastors frequently belonged to the

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31 Ibid., 199.

32 Her. von einer Commission des Verbandes „Arbeiterwohl", *Das häusliche Glück* (Leipzig: Riffarth, 1882). Quoted after Ingeborg Weber-Kellermann, 191 [translation and italics mine].

ruling classes and partly were dependent on them."[33] The historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler justly emphasizes that

> [i]n the din of theological-political disputes most of them [the pastors] did not perceive that at the same time the church [the Protestant Church] remained blind to the immense social consequences of the entire social process of transformation so that it failed on all accounts...to care for the immense army of the impoverished lower classes.[34]

Karl Marx's view of religion as the opium of the people echoes true in a century where the church supported the *suffering role* of women instead of addressing the cause of this enormous poverty and injustice. The reason why this question was never addressed was, *inter alia* due to the prevailing pietist movement, led by theologian Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg. Hengstenberg encouraged clerical and aristocratic conservatives to believe in "a God-given opposition against every ecclesiastic and political liberalization."[35] On the basis of this, one of the most important members of this movement, Adolf von Thadden-Trieglaff, was able to define the divine commandment of loving one's neighbor by the interesting interpretation that "to serve one's neighbor in true love first of all required maintaining the successful custom of ruling over him."[36] On the other hand it is von Thadden-Trieglaff who in connection with his daughter Elisabeth was to initiate the so-called "Trieglaffer Konferenzen" (Trieglaff conferences) from 1918 on. Here democratic leaders and personalities from the Protestant Church meet together with representatives of the National Liberals and

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33 Herbert Gutschera, *Brennpunkte*, 199 [translaton mine].

34 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1815-1845/49* vol. 2 (München: Beck, 1987), 459 [translation mine].

35 Ibid., vol. 2, 464 [translation mine].

36 Hans-Ulrich Wehler, 465 [translation mine].

the Social Democrats. It was to be this daughter Elisabeth von Thadden who was deeply convinced that "we are culprits of the social need."[37] So she founded a country boarding school for girls in 1927, the goals of which were to teach the girls "a clear evangelical awareness," an "education in order to achieve a Christian consciousness according to the gospels."[38] This daughter of a very conservative member of Germany's high aristocracy had to pay with her life for these convictions. She was guillotined by the Nazis in 1944 in Berlin-Plötzensee. Her High School in Heidelberg, now a school for co-education, still exists. At my time of teaching there, it fulfilled all my ideas about what a Protestant High School should be, namely a place where academic and spiritual education was equally important, where multiculturalism found its place, where pupils and teachers were united in a mutual learning process of justice.

The great social shifts in nineteenth century society, the division of a whole nation into rich (mostly aristocracy and the bourgeoisie), and those below poverty (small farmers and the working population), influenced the expressions of Eros and Sexuality in significant ways. On the one hand there existed a libertine upper class and, on the other end of the spectrum, the insistence on marrying virginal girls with no sexual experience at all was the accepted norm. And then there were the great physical needs of the proletariat, forcing women into some form of slave labor or even prostitution in order to survive. The century saw great women like Queen Luise,

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[37] Walther Kummerow, in *Elisabeth-von-Thadden-Schule. Annäherung an eine 60jährige Schulgeschichte* (Heidelberg: ABC-Druck, 1987), 16 [translation mine].

[38] Ibid., 21 [translation mine].

a representative of the leading class, Rahel Levin and Bettina von Arnim (1785 – 1859), the famous collector of letters and a writer herself, both educated and learned women, or Betty Gleim (1781 – 1827), who insisted on women's education. All these, however, stood out as individuals, not as examples of a class of women; and none of them belonged to the working classes. There was no provision for old women, for single women (unless they were women of private means or had the opportunity to live in convents, or in homes for gentlewomen). And yet, the first order of deaconesses in Germany was established in the nineteenth century. Again, this order — highly respectable as it was — brought with it the old image of women: women whose main task in life was to nurture and look after others. And of course its price was the a renunciation of Eros and Sexuality in the service of the other. While a cautious analysis can detect some traces of a development towards a liberation for women, these are minute and often linked intrinsically to the social classes to which these women belonged.

But times change. Today Germany's only magazine for feminism, *Emma*, reports about the revolutionary first steps, where the old male privileges to marry a younger partner are taken over by women. Still scarce, they nonetheless do exist: "In every fifth marriage in Germany today the woman is older than the man," *Emma* reports, and tells us about the actress Hannelore Hoger (aged 59) whose partner is 25 years younger than she is. When asked if she was not afraid of resentment, she answers: "Don't panic! I am prepared, because women are not allowed to do what men in an age of sobriety consider to be their duty: namely to marry a woman as

young as possible who has to bear children as well. At least I am freed from that duty."[39]

There may yet be hope for Eros and Sexuality in the Germany of this century, in a way that did not hold true in the nineteenth century, as the *Silly Teenagers' Stories* will prove.

The Silly Teenagers' Stories

Clementine Helm *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden* (*Silly Teenager's Joys and* Sorrows)

Contents

The fifteen year old Margarete Geßler, oldest of seven, is sent to her widowed aunt Ulrike von Jagow in Berlin in order to be made familiar with the rules of the "better society". She leaves her father's rural estate to stay in Berlin for about two years. Step by step she learns how to take care of her outward appearance, to distinguish between the behavior towards friends and strangers, and, in particular young men. While Gretchen, as she is called by her aunt, finds an adequate friend in Marie, her aunt's other niece, Eugenie, is her complete counterpart. All three girls find their place in life; which in this novel means the adequate husband: a baronet for Eugenie, a civil servant for Gretchen, and for the soulful Marie a pastor.

Clementine Helm's *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden* was written in 1863. In 1896 the book was in its 50th edition, and in 1914 it had reached the 76th edition.[40]

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[39] Alice Schwarzer, *Emma.* Nr. 2, March/April 2001, Emma-Frauenverlag, Köln, 71 [translation mine].

The entire book consists of Gretchen's report. In itself this sometimes reads like a handbook on trivial procedures like brushing one's teeth, washing oneself, looking after one's clothes, combined with lectures on proper behavior, how to travel, how to run a household, all of which is mingled with two love-stories (Marie is too sweet and ethereal as to be granted one of her own).

One of the two protagonists is Gretchen, a naïve girl from the countryside who initially displays some traces of authenticity but in the course of the novel shrinks into a faceless young woman who is not an individual any longer. She blindly follows her aunt's guidance and, in the end, will be a perfectly domesticated creature. Even her future husband, Dr. Theodor Hausmann, is introduced within the first third of the book and the reader can easily guess about the course of events already; there is next to no suspense. The "catastrophes" in Margarete's life consist in wearing the wrong shoes or gloves, eating the wrong food – for example caviar (which she mistakes for sweets) – and addressing men in the wrong way. At only one stage does she seem to cause a genuine human catastrophe, brought about by her habit of caring for young men, when she nurses the shy Baron von Senft who mistakes this for a genuine interest in his person and proposes to her.

As the trivial parts of the book cannot have established its considerable success, there must have been other reasons. I presume that it is the contrast between the extremely adaptive Margarete and her stubborn, arrogant, elegant, wealthy, and rather refined cousin Eugenie, the secondary protagonist. Coming from a wealthy, and

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[40] Clementine Helm, *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden: Eine Erzählung für junge Mädchen* (Leipzig: Georg Wigand, n. d.), forword 1, forword 2.

socially highly approved of home, Eugenie is not interested in other people's opinions. She has a sharp understanding and can be witty if she chooses to be. So she inquires about Gretchen's friend Marie: "Is she always so blue and fair?" referring to Marie's favorite color and her blond hair. She calls the two inseparable girls "Castor" and "Pollux" like the twin-sons of the Greek god Zeus with Leda, and declares Marie to be a little "butter sheep," again referring to her fair hair, her sweet temper which has nothing edgy and sharp. At one point she is even comparing her to the biblical "Magdalene doing penitence."[41] Eugenie is imaginative and at Gretchen's first ball she sends the girl (whom she calls "daisy" because of her rural background) a genuine wreath of daisies that hide a costly wreath of silk apple-blossoms matching Gretchen's ball robe.

The intellectual education in Helm's novel consists of the reading out aloud of approved German literature. Aunt Ulrike von Jagow and niece Gretchen – Eugenie refuses to take part – occupy themselves with Goethe's *Tasso, Götz von Berlichingen*, and Emmanuel Geibel's poems. The same pattern can be applied to the journeys aunt and teenager niece Margarete undertake together. It is Bavaria with Bamberg and its famous cathedral; Nuremberg with its Sebaldus church; Munich, punctuated by the Bavarian Alps. This is no educational journey à la Goethe which would have comprised Italy. It is the safe, narrow, approved of part of Germany, approved of by this class of society. There is no report about a lack of education and the yearning for higher things, as Ottilie Wildermuth would have expressed it. Gretchen's education is sufficient for the wife of a civil servant of her time.

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41 Ibid., 119 [translations mine].

There is little said about religious or spiritual education. For a girl of the upper classes this was taken for granted. Only when Eugenie joins her aunt and cousin with Jesus' words "For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them"(Matthew 18:20), the aunt reproaches her "outrageous words," telling her "I will forgive you thoughtlessness and bad habits, but I do not want to know those who ridicule the saints. I hope you realize how irresponsible you have acted and repent from the bottom of your heart."[42] But she does not tell the girl why the quotation is frivolous in her opinion. Apparently piety is not to be questioned.

The same applies for the highly questionable conduct vis-à-vis destitute persons in this novel. They are objects of pity and lead Gretchen to the outrageous question: "Do you like to do good to the poor, Eugenie…because for a long time I had the intention to introduce my rich cousin to my poor ones whom I visited regularly once a week."[43] When Eugenie answers that "the poor ones are extremely troublesome and therefore I quickly give them something … then I can get rid of them", Gretchen reproaches her: "But that's not correct, Eugenie, that's not the reason to do it but out of pity…" Again there is no genuine dispute about the background and the social reasons for being poor. When Eugenie is willing to help she does so in a rather ridiculous way. Instead of inquiring after the needs of the poor people, she gives them gold chains or provides them with table cloths, napkins, silver cutlery, because she herself is shocked to see them eat from one and the same plate with pewter forks and spoons. Although she gives in to ask her aunt for advice in the end, the whole topic is treated highly cursory, one task in a lady-to-be's catalogue of education.

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42 Ibid., 115 [translation mine].

In Helm's novel Eugenie is referred to as an "independent" person. Her "great independence and peculiarity are…an attractive but dangerous addition,"[44] so her aunt judges. The source for this interesting interpretation of "independence" is seen in Eugenie's stepmother, "a young girl [sic]…who was beautiful and charming but full of recklessness and of an ill-tempered mood. No warning helped; he [Eugenie's father] married her and realized too late that he had taken home a vain, heartless woman. For the sake of peace he endures all her follies but in the ten years of his marriage he has become a tired man,"[45] so aunt Ulrike reports about her brother-in-law. In an embarrassing comparison the letters of Gretchen's and Eugenie's mothers are contrasted, here the letters which create homesickness and tenderness, there the superficial advice of what to wear, the latest French fashion, how to treat face and hair, which causes Eugenie to exclaim: "Oh, aunt, aunt, what a mother I have!"[46] It is all the woman's fault and not a word about the man who had married a woman many times his junior. On the contrary, throughout the whole novel Eugenie's father is portrayed as a sufferer. But like in fairy tales his vain wife dies in the end, aunt Ulrike now presides over her brother-in-law's household, and he himself is rewarded with a ministerial post. And since he obtains Gretchen's newly-married husband a job in his department, aunt Ulrike's influence surely will not cease. Margarete's report ends with the words: "With aunt Ulrike close by…I was given a life full of sunshine and peace."[47]

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43 Ibid., 133 [translation mine].
44 Ibid., 95 [translation mine].
45 Ibid., 95 [translation mine].
46 Ibid., 147 [translation mine].
47 Ibid., 271 [translation mine].

Such an ending has much in common with that of fairy tales - "and they lived happily together until the end of their days," and it is one that nearly all the Silly Teenagers' Stories have in common. They all end up with an outlook on life where all difficulties have come to an end. In *Papas Junge* the novel ends with the ringing of Christmas bells and the slightly altered biblical quotation of Luke 2:14 "on earth joy and delight among human beings."[48]

To prove how dependent women are on men even if they are supposed to be "independent" like Eugenie is demonstrated by two corresponding, grotesque scenes. Gretchen, who wants to portray the Bavarian landscape, fancies herself to be harrassed by a man, described as "a huge guy who threateningly brandished a stick similar to a club."[49] The girl tries to escape, fearing death. When she notices a gentleman in town clothes, she cries for help and sinks into his arms. Luckily it is Dr. Hausmann (her later husband, as it would have been highly improper to sink into any other man's arms) who tells her the real circumstances: Gretchen's aunt had forgotten her umbrella and the huge man wanted to return it, trying to attract Gretchen's attention by showing her the "club," the umbrella.

Apart from the fact that this scene is designed to show the "neediness" of women it is interesting in so far as it develops another trait: All unknown men are dangerous. The heroes are the "good ones," acting meekly and mild. The others are those who are strictly to be avoided. This point of view bans all female curiosity, and curiosity must be forbidden at all costs as it could lead to a personal development of

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[48] Henny Koch, *Papas Junge. Eine Erzählung für junge Mädchen* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, n. d.), 332 [translation mine].

the woman (including her own sexuality and her sexual desires). "The image of the incorrigible, promiscuous wife played on male fantasies and fears of women's sexuality. It is based on a way of thinking that sees women's ...sexuality as deviant and threatening of the status and well-being of men....Male status and prestige rose and fell according to a man's ability to control the sexual activities of the women in his household."[50] What Renita Weems writes about is life in ancient Israel. But her discoveries are still valid more than one thousand years later, just as they are today.

Eugenie's accident is slightly different. When she and Gretchen cross a meadow, they are followed by a bull, provoked by Eugenie's red scarf. The moment the bull is about to attack the young woman, the animal receives such a blow that it is knocked out: "A high manly figure then hastened...to Eugenie who feebly fell to the ground."[51] The rescuing gentleman proves to be Gretchen's refused suitor, the shy baronet. "Here in free nature...the baronet was totally different than in Berlin. There was nothing of that awkward clumsiness by which so often he attracted a ridiculous attention...The boldness and strength with which he had thrown down Eugenie's attacker proved his male power and importance."[52] Clementine Helm apparently had little idea how laden with sexual imageries her language was, and her readers either. Should one regard the bull (or the "club" in Gretchen's case) as an image of animal sexuality or passion, ironically the future husband is shown to be the one who "rescues" the protagonist from it. Here again we find the preference of "the gentle

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49 Clementine Helm, 246 [translation mine].

50 Renita J. Weems, *Battered Love. Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 41, 43.

51 Clementine Helm, 163 [translation mine].

52 Ibid., 164 [translation mine].

flame of tender emotions which mellows the horror of heroic [here: "male"] virtues,"[53] Queen Luise's court chaplain had recommended. The consequence of this encounter is the baronet's engagement with "the poor damsel in distress," enriched only by the piquant detail that Eugenie proposes instead of the enamored but still shy baronet. She even fixes the day of the marriage as the baronet injures his leg, resulting in such stiffness, that he regards himself as a "cripple." He nobly breaks his engagement. Consequently, the reformed Eugenie tells her aunt: "It was your duty to tell me this [the description of a life with a disabled husband] and my fiancé's delicacy commanded him as well to release me from my vow..."[54] But reformed as she is she nobly takes him, and heaven rewards such a "sacrifice." In the Spa of Teplitz the baronet is healed.

The topic of the *Poor Damsel in Distress* is an old one. Christian legends tell about St. George who freed the princess from the dragon's clutches. In fairy tales it is the prince who rescues the distressed beauty. In *Brier Rose*, when the prince had found the sleeping princess, "he leaned over and gave her a kiss, and when his lips touched hers, Brier Rose opened her eyes, woke up, and looked at him fondly."[55] In *King Thrushbeard* it is the mature man educating a vain princess who finds fault with all her royal suitors. After many hardships and humiliations, he tells her " 'I did all that to humble your proud spirit.'...Then she shed bitter tears and said, 'I've done a great wrong and don't deserve to be your wife.' However, he said, 'Console yourself.

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53 Günter de Bruyn, Preussens Luise, 76.

54 Ibid., 208 [translation mine].

55 Jack Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* vol. I (New York: Bantam, 1988), 205.

The bad days are over. Now we shall celebrate our wedding.'"[56] In *Snow White* the prince even claims the seemingly dead princess in her glass coffin from the dwarfs. When she awakes and asks: " 'Oh, Lord! Where am I?'...[t]he prince rejoiced and said, 'You're with me...I love you more than anything else in the world. Come with me to my father's castle. I want you to be my wife.'"[57] So the bewitched princess, the impudent princess, and even the deceased princess, all of them need a rescuing prince.

The Poor Damsel in Distress

Why do young as well as adolescent girls even nowadays still believe in the eternal prince who has nothing better to do than rescue them and arrange their lives for them? The German feminist theologian and psychologist Jutta Voss, who, in 1993, became "defrocked" by the Evangelische Landeskirche Württemberg, speaks about a neurotic complex:

> I want to elucidate the educational deformation of girls into a dependent, needy woman according to a patriarchal role model...by the eternal symbol of the fairy tale prince. If only he arrives, he rescues the girl from all anxieties, marries her, ends all problems and makes her happy to the end of her life. This sort of fairy tale will be offered to three year old girls until those going through puberty as stadiums of an inescapable development, which programs her concretely onto this goal and role understanding. The paradise of an all comprising happiness is only reached through the man. So this neurotic, ill-making fairy tale-prince-complex is deeply anchored and will not be diagnosed as a neurosis because in our society it represents a desirable and 'healthy' norm, regardless of how many women drown in their depressions.[58]

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56 Ibid., 212.

57 Ibid., 220.

58 Jutta Voss, *Das Schwarzmond-Tabu. Die kulturelle Bedeutung des weiblichen Zyklus* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1988), 74 [translation mine].

May I suggest an alternative way to look at the story?

Whose Tale? An Interlude

Once upon a time there was a maiden of noble birth. Her father was a prominent king and her mother famous for her piety. So the young girl, their only daughter, was educated very carefully. Her long and ivory-colored hands learned how to draw letters from ancient manuscripts of legends. She could play the harp and do exquisite silk embroideries. She also became famous for her perfect and refined manners. So she was able to entertain princes from far-away countries, particularly as she could speak their languages fluently.

Every morning her hair was elaborately styled into a sort of crown, decorated with pearls and gems. Her dresses were made from velvet and silk and everybody admired her attire. She soon became a model of beauty and modesty.

Although she was so gifted, she had never learned to look at plants and animals. They simply bored her. So it happened that she had never learned the language of flowers and animals.

Every week her father gave a huge festival, which always culminated in a ball. One of her suitors was a young man of impeccably noble birth. His name was George and he was excellent on horseback, although it has to be admitted that he was a little bit dull. He never spoke much and, when he did, it was often platitudes. But the maiden mistook that for a very deep wit.

One day it happened that she went into her father's forests and suddenly found herself alone. All her maids were far behind because she always assumed on a very quick pace, and they could not follow her. When she came to some rocks, she saw an opening that looked like a gate. Full of curiosity she went towards the gate and peeped

into it, but was deeply shocked when she heard a terrifying noise. A dragon rushed out of the cave, full of delight to see her. "Have you come at last, my love," he cried, " to free me from my ignoble circumstances?" But as she had never learned the language of animals she could not make out what he was saying and thought he was smoking and fuming with rage, thus snarling at her: "How dare you disturb me?"

Horrified, she started yelling, something she had never done before. But nobody came to aid her. Out of despair she put out a piece of golden string which she usually kept for stringing up beads, and courageously she stepped towards the dragon. He of course was delighted, bent down his head so that she was able to put the string around him. She did not listen to the birds, sitting in the trees and telling her: "Don't do it! You will spoil the best!" Neither did she listen to the soft whispers of the flowers around her, warning her likewise: "Don't do it! You will destroy all that counts!" Instead she went on yelling as she was afraid of the still fuming animal.

And this time someone heard her. It was dull George, the nobleman. He appeared on his white stallion and was disgusted to find her in such an inappropriate situation. Following her example he pulled out another piece of string and tied it round the dragon's neck. In doing so he did not utter a single word. "Oh, how shall I ever be able to repay your great kindness," lisped the maiden. And he condescendingly answered: "You may marry me." And as she had been brought up with so many legends, the poor damsel in distress gladly agreed to become his wife.

On one very bright day all the bells of her father's capital kept ringing for eight hours, which was the appropriate duration for a princess (whereas a prince got ten hours, of course). The former royal maiden left the town's cathedral at the hand of her consort. He wore the blue ribbon of the royal order which he had been given for

rescuing the beauty, apart from numerous other gifts. And, as you all know, he had even been sainted. The poor dragon, however, had been put into a large cage and was thoroughly bewildered.

Years after, George's wife felt a crave for something different than modesty, piety, and excellent behavior, and whenever she passed the dragon's cage, she became utterly depressed. But until her very end she did not find out what was missing in her life, something that was more than refinement, perfect manners, and an always gentle disposition. All she did was to expel all plants and animals from her surroundings as she could not bear their vitality, wildness, and independence. So all her portraits show a lady with regular features, an ivory colored skin, but a face with a slightly bored expression.

Today her youngest daughter, one of fifteen highly accomplished young ladies, can be seen roaming through the deep and dark forests, always accompanied by her faithful dogs and with birds around her, and always found with one particularly beautiful rose in a vibrant red. There may be hope, after all.



Fig. 1. Paolo Uccello, *Saint George and the Dragon*, c.1455-1460
Tempera on canvas, 57 × 73 cm, National Gallery, London.

According to Jutta Voss, "fairy tales have been misused in Christian time for the internalization of special and desired moral concepts."[59]

Scripture frequently concerns itself with such moral precepts. Titus 2:3-5, for instance, speaks about how: "young women [should be encouraged] to love their husbands, to love their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, good managers of the household, kind, being submissive to their husbands." Joanna Dewey is justified in commenting: "These texts are part of the New Testament canon; they have been and still are used to control Christian women's behavior. Read from the pulpit today, they

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59 Jutta Voss, 74 [translation mine].

appear as general injunctions valid for all time. Such is the power of an authoritative *written* text."[60] The wish to domesticize and brand male interests on women is very old.

Emmy von Rhoden *Der Trotzkopf (The Stubborn Girl)*

Contents

Ilse Macket, fifteen years old, lives on her father's estate. Her mother had died, when Ilse was a little girl. So both, father and daughter, had lived on their own, until Herr Macket met his second wife. Meanwhile Ilse has turned into a tomboy, acting only according to her own wishes and whims. As she has next to no education, the local pastor suggests putting her into a boarding school. When Ilse's father has to acknowledge that even he is unable to govern her, the girl is sent to an institute in a far away town. Ilse of course thinks that all this is her stepmother's doing and reacts accordingly.

In the boarding school Ilse shares a room with a British boarder, Nellie, an orphan who is training to become a governess. Nellie becomes Ilse's best friend and, together with Fräulein Güssow, a young teacher, shows her a different aspect of life. After Ilse has stayed there for nearly two years, she is "reformed." The happy end consists of three brides: Ilse, Nellie, and the young teacher, and a "real" boy for the father, a little son by his second wife, Ilse's stepmother.

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60 Joanna Dewey, "From Oral Stories to Written Text" in Kwok Pui-Lan and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed., *Women's Sacred Scriptures*, Concilium 1998/3 (London: SCM Press, 1998), 26.

"Emmy von Rhoden's *Der Trotzkopf* (1885), the first volume of a *Trotzkopf* series, still a bestseller of teenager literature, did not only shape our picture of girls' *literature*, but of girls' *lives* of the past decisively and problematically as well," Gisela Wilkending judged in her essay on *Mädchenliteratur von der Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zum 1. Weltkrieg (Girls' Literature from the Middle of the 19th Century until World War I).*[61]

After the fall of the Berlin wall and Germany's reunification it even became successful in the former GDR, so my bookseller told me, where this sort of literature had been forbidden because it was judged to be bourgeois. Although the story is not as crude as Clementine Helm's it is hard to understand why this book fascinated girls and young women (and still continues to do so).

Like Eugenie, Ilse's mother had died, whereas Nellie and Fräulein Güssow are without father and mother altogether. For the girl without private means, so this story stresses, there are only two possibilities: she can either work for her living or marry someone, as both, Nellie and Fräulein Güssow, do at the end of the novel. From the very beginning it is clear that a teaching position is nothing to be preferred ("only spinsters can become governesses,"[62] "I am sorry, darling, that you have to serve among strangers"[63]) and that female fulfillment can only lie in marriage. In order to reach this main goal a girl has to be educated according to standards established by a male and patriarchally oriented society. One of its main rules is: "A child has to ask to

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61 In Reiner Wild, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1990), 242 [translation mine]. *Note:* This analysis does not reflect on the three remaining works in the *Trotzkopf*-series: *Trotzkopfs Brautzeit (Stubborn Girl's Time of Engangement)*, *Aus Trotzkopfs Ehe (Of Stubborn Girl's Marriage)*, *Trotzkopf als Großmutter (The Stubborn Girl as a Grandmother).* None of these works were composed by Emmy von Rhoden herself.

62 Emmy von Rhoden, *Der Trotzkopf* (Wien: Ueberreuter, 1982), [translation mine].

be forgiven *and a girl in particular.*"[64] In order to make Ilse act according to this principle, she is never given any reasonable explanation for this statement but instead told the melodramatic story of "Luzie," in fact Fräulein Güssow's own story of life: before becoming a governess.

Fräulein Güssow herself at the age of sixteen had been engaged to a painter. This man had asked her again and again whether she loved him and she had answered according to the whims and inclination of her age. When one day he had asked her, would she marry him without any money, she refused him like a spoilt teenager. The consequence had been that he had returned her broken engagement ring and had sent her a letter telling her: "How could I claim from fate the right that my life will be sunlit only? Farewell. I loved you very much."[65] Coincidentally, Güssow's fiancé is the brother of Ilse's stepmother. Needless to say, he becomes a successful painter. And of course he will marry his former stubborn, now reformed, bride who – rightly punished by fate - had lost all her money. Thus he mirrors the fairy tale's King Thrushbeard, and again it is the man who is seen to be morally superior to the woman. One similarity between *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden* and *Der Trotzkopf* is the topic of the good and the evil mother. Ilse's mother, though "only" a stepmother, is reported to be cordial, nurturing, soothing, and forgiving. Herr Macket married her "because her prudent and *gentle* way captivated him."[66] This again, reflects the Queen-Luise-model. Her counterpart is Lilli's egotist mother. Lilli, one of the boarders, is the little daughter of a Viennese Burg-actress. Everybody is enchanted by

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63 Ibid., 179 [translation mine].
64 Ibid., 59 [translation and italics mine].
65 Ibid., 67 [translation mine].

the child's beauty, but it is the would-be and often belittled poet Flora, another boarder, who speaks about Lilli's "Mignon-eyes" which seem to express something like: "Bad world, I do not fit you."[67]

Again there is an embarrassing scene: Lilli's mother does not even fetch the child for Christmas, she only sends her fancy dresses where woolen clothes and sturdy stockings would have been appropriate. When she gives her a doll, dressed in a costly ball robe, the child comments: "This one is too dressed up, this one I cannot put to bed. This one cannot be my child,"[68] and prefers the simple doll given to her by Ilse. When Flora's prophecy comes true and Lilly really dies, her mother does not even come to see her dead child or bury her. It is the community of the boarding school who puts her into her grave. Her mother only sends costly flowers and wants to have a kneeling stone angel for Lilly's grave with the inscription: "Precious child, pray for me."[69]

Before her death there is an interesting discussion between Ilse and Lilli about the Christ child: " 'Does he live in heaven?' asked Lilly. 'Look, there I would wish to live as well. There it is beautiful. Isn't it? There the dear little angels sing, who formerly lived in the world, those were the well-behaved children, weren't they? The dear God fetched them into his realm of heaven, didn't he, Ilse?'" When Nellie in her down-to-earth way counters, echoing John 6:46: 'No human being has ever looked into heaven,' Lilli retorts: 'But Mama said so; she knows, doesn't she, Ilse?'"[70]

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66 Ibid., 7 [translation mine].
67 Ibid., 89 [translation mine].
68 Ibid., 101 [translation mine].
69 Ibid., 129 [translation mine].
70 Ibid., 98 [translation mine].

Although this passage cannot be compared to the "mother Clarissa passage" in Spyri's *Gritlis Kinder*, simply because Spyri is certainly not as cursory and shallow as is von Rhoden here, it is of interest because of the sentiment that God calls only the *well-behaved* children to be his [sic] angels. Even death becomes a means of education. But there is a genuine correspondence between Spyri and von Rhoden with regard to a heavy mundane destiny which people who die young might escape. Aunt Clarissa's explanation to Mrs Stanhope: "If our darling is to live only to suffer through long years of pain, can you wish for life to her? Why should we wish to keep her here…rather than let her go to that heavenly home, where there is no more sorrow or pain?"[71] This passage can be compared to Nellie's statement: "If the Lord says: 'I want to take the little angel unto myself, what can we do then? Oh, Ilse, it is not at all horrible to die as a young child. Who knows what sad fate might have waited for our Lilli. Is it not better to be dead? I would have been very happy, had the good God taken me unto himself as a little child."[72] It is likely that this way of dealing with the death of young persons reflects the 19th century hardships in bringing up children. To the individualistic way of thinking in the 21st century it nevertheless presents a rather stereotypical idea where, contrary to von Rhoden, Spyri at least tries to give the topic some depth.

As in Helm's novel *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden*, genuine questions of religion or faith do not play an important role in *Der Trotzkopf*, either. On the contrary, von Rhoden confesses a bias which certainly is not representative for all her time. When Miss Lead, the English boarding school teacher, wants to go to church

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71 Johanna Spyri, *Gritli's Children* (Boston: Cupples and Hurd, 1887), 16.

with the pupils, all but the British pupils refuse to accompany her, because they are all too overwhelmed by Lilli's illness. "'I cannot understand this,' the English lady spoke…'Is not the house of God the best place for a tormented heart? Does not the Lord say: Come to me, all you that are weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!'(Matthew 11:28) … She went, and the British boarders joined her. They shared the opinion of the teacher in their *orthodox* hearts."[73] Von Rhoden gives a curious explanation, and again it is Nellie, British herself, who is the bearer of von Rhoden's ideas: "Only Nellie remained. Not because she was less believing – oh no! She was filled with a deep faith but it would have been impossible for her to leave the house [the boarding school] which had become a dear homeland to her, at this moment… She went into the back of the room, knelt down and prayed passionately and fervently to God that he might keep Lilli alive."[74] I cannot judge whether this might be an example for early chauvinism or a form of the protestant ethic of praying alone in one's chamber (Matthew 6:5). Nellie is to marry the teacher of German language and literature, Dr. Althoff. So she may be looked at as a "half-German" already. While these might seem as small details, I underscore them here to emphasize the traits of chauvinism and patriarchy that are so prevalent in this literature.

The main subject of von Rhoden is that of domestication, not education. The male aspect of education is reflected by Ilse's father, when his second wife stresses the fact that Ilse is without a well grounded intellectual education. His answer is typical: "What does that matter for a girl…She shall not become a learned woman; if

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72 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].

73 Ibid., 128 [translation and italics mine].

74 Ibid., 128 [translation mine].

she can write a letter and has learned her multiplication tables she knows enough."[75] Although deep down he has to agree with the pastor's arguments that, at such a level of education Ilse may be thought of as uneducated and stupid, he remains unconvinced.

The last part of the book is proof of Ilse's perfectly effective domestication. It is a repetition of the opening scenes of the novel. When Ilse had arrived at the boarding school she felt insulted because the headmistress had criticized her table manners[76], now Ilse asks to be forgiven for every offence. Where in the beginning Ilse took four rolls at once and ate them together with a sandwich,[77] she now knows: "A genuine lady was not allowed to let anybody know that she was hungry, that would have been downright childish."[78] The "reformed" Ilse who has to travel back home on her own, but as she has become so attractive Fräulein Güssow fears for her well-being. So she counsels her in exactly the way the editors of the *Girls' Own Annual* did: "Just in case, I warn you not to accept the attention or kindness…of a gentleman, may he be young or old."[79] This, of course, leads to a ridiculous scene, where the son of friends who is to pick Ilse up, but to whom she is unknown and vice versa, addresses her. She had lost a letter and he had found out that it belonged to her. "What did he want from her? Why did he address her? As if she had not heard anything she continued

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75 Ibid., 11 [translation mine].
76 Ibid., 39.
77 Ibid., 34 [translation mine].
78 Ibid., 159 [translation mine].
79 Ibid., 152 [translation mine].

walking."[80] The situation is similar to that of Helm's Gretchen, although not as dramatic. And again it is the husband-to-be who helps the maiden in distress.

As in Helm's novel, von Rhoden's story ends with three unions for life: one marriage and two engagements. And similarly to Helm these stories are not developed but simply occur. After Ilse's return home she shows her photo album to her step-uncle, the painter. Of course he recognizes his former bride, Fräulein Güssow. So he takes leave in order to find her. They secretly marry and the former teacher informs her pupil, now her niece, Ilse, about the happy end of her own and of Luzie's story.

Similarly Nellie is on the point of leaving the boarding school in order to take her first post as a governess, when, out of the blue, Dr. Althoff appears and asks her: "Do you love me? Do you want to be my *little* wife?"[81] And of course she agrees.

Ilse's engagement is the consequence of Nellie's. The development is even clumsier. When Ilse meets Leo Gontrau, the gentleman who picked her up from the station, she is still overwhelmed by Nellie's letter. Gontrau asks her to read it aloud to him, although Ilse hardly knows him. Though she is not convinced that this is appropriate, she gives in and reads the letter to him. Of course he repeats Dr. Althoff's question: "Do you love me, do you want to be my *little* wife?" and Ilse rejects him at first. But then she agrees because she suddenly remembers Luzie's warning – but nevertheless completely different – fate. When he wants to kiss her, she reacts in a way that would have been appropriate for a young woman who had no deeper

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80 Ibid., 159 [translation mine].

81 Ibid., 180 [translation and italics mine].

connection to a man, next to a stranger. She answers: "Kissing is not allowed…How could I let myself be kissed by a strange man."[82]

The natural emotions of a young girl of seventeen are suppressed for an adaptation to a patriarchally oriented society, where only the father asks in the end: "Ilse, my *little* Ilse… Is it true? Do you want to leave me?"[83] The *little* woman leaves her father in order to become the *little* wife. The marriage ceremonies themselves underline this act: the bride passes from the hands of her father to those of her husband.

When Gayle Rubin asks the question: "What is a domesticated woman?" the answer is "A female of the species," and she continues:

> The place to begin to unravel the system of relationships by which women become the prey of men is in the overlapping works of Claude Lévi-Strauss and Sigmund Freud. The domestication of women, under other names, is discussed at length in both their *oeuvres*. In reading through these works, under other names, one begins to have a sense of a systematic social apparatus which takes up females as raw materials and fashions domesticated women as products. Neither Freud nor Lévi-Strauss sees his work in this light, and certainly neither turns a critical glance upon the processes he describes.[84]

Domesticated women as "products" were the subject matter of the 19th century and remain so today. For girls and young women, particularly in the 19th century, not only their mothers play an important role, their fathers do so as well. In a patriarchal society it is important to be accepted by the father, to be loved by him. Not only is he the prototype in heterosexual relationships for all husbands-to-be, he is important for

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82 Ibid., 190 [translation mine].

83 Ibid., 190 [translation and italics mine].

84 Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex," in Linda Nicholson, ed. *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28.

the girl's development, in helping her to become her real self. The question remains why throughout so many centuries numerous women accepted their male-given role and did not dare to protest against it. As this can be explained by female economic dependency in former centuries, this cannot be said of today, where even successful women ("success" in the male understanding of "climbing the ladder") are often questioned in their gender role:

To what incredible degree the neediness for male acceptance can go, was shown in the German TV interview *Beckmann* (ARD talkshow, February 2002), where the feminist editor Alice Schwarzer spoke about the pressure on successful women to present themselves as sexually attractive and desirable which, in the extreme, can lead to their posing in the nude. Schwarzer justly commented that this procedure makes women most vulnerable. No successful man would even dream of posing that way. Why does an educated and successful woman agree to this humiliating procedure? The reason must lie deeper. Heterosexual women, so it seems, often value male applause more than female applause. As it looks they want to please men more.

Hildegunde Wöllner gives an explanation for this behavior in her book with the significant title *Vom Vater verwundet. Töchter der Bibel (Wounded by the Father. Daughters of the Bible)*:

> ...literature until the trivial novel brings in its train the never-ending story of an unimportant Cinderella's yearning for love, Cinderella who projects those numinous strengths [caused by the religion of the creation bliss of matrilocated acts of worship] which shall liberate her, liberate her to herself and her cosmic religious competence, upon the far away, unknown man. This is the reason for woman's inclination to be seduced, her ever new

> story of suffering and disappointment...But the patriarchal walls of her prison are so thick that until now only a few found out that not a man but only her spiritual strength inside herself can fulfil her craving.[85]

Here the two traits come together: the "Cinderella" feature which stands for all the children's stories and their influence, and the "father" trait, which seems so important for the acceptance of one's self, particularly for girls and young women.

The self-stripping of women in order to prove their femininity is an act of degradation. It is an attack on their dignity and should be called a new form of subjugation - had it not been that this "subjugation" is self inflicted to a certain degree. Women exposed in glossy male magazines accept this because they want to appeal to male ideas about femininity. To my belief dependency of any kind, even if psycho-social, is an absence of freedom. Contrary to genuinely enslaved women these modern-day subjugated women are mostly white, educated, with no lack of money, women who do not "struggle to realize human wholeness and freedom" as the African American ethicist Joan Martin puts it. [86] Whereas African American enslaved women struggled "for self-expression by humans considered to be non-humans,"[87] these successful white women want to prove that, although they excel in a competition dictated by men, they did not turn into bluestockings but remained attractive; that they still live according to standards set up by men. The one similarity – although on a different level – can be seen in the fact that they are not taken for what they are,

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85 Hildegunde Wöller, *Vom Vater verwundet. Töchter der Bibel* (Stuttgart: Kreuz Verlag, 1992), 92f., [translation mine].

86 Joan M. Martin, "The Slave Narratives and Womanist Ethics," in *Women's Sacred Scriptures*, Concilium 1998/3, 65.

87 Ibid., 66.

human beings. In order to be accepted, to be loved, they have to do better: their bodies have to be shaped and moulded according to male wishes.

Susie Orbach, a British specialist for anorexia and bulimia, once the therapist of Diana, Princess of Wales, defines this great (and chiefly female) illness:

> Behind their anorexia quite often there is the enormous anxiety to accept their own needs. Not only needs connected with food. I mean needs of all kinds … They cannot live what they wish for themselves, cannot follow their own way. Whether it is in love or in their jobs: anorexia is an inner imprisonment. Anorexic women feel: "All that I am myself or what comes from me is wrong. I have no rights, I am not allowed to be the person I am."[88]

This is world apart from what the Latin American feminist theologian Elsa Tamez emphasizes: "We might say that women's bodies also 'spark off' sacred, epiphanic spaces."[89]

But the idea of a new, although mundane and very doubtful creation is in the anorexic woman as well, when Orbach states: "The anorexic woman wants to create a new human being out of herself, a person whom she can admire… Jane Fonda…has spoken about her eating disorders. Or Liz Hurley, she, too, is on a perpetual diet. The actress Uma Thurman hates her body. Yet all these women are icons of femininity."[90]

Although all of the quoted women are white and successful, what Elsa Tamez says about Latin American Women can be applied to them, too: "We can even go further and say that the battered lives of many women show male-dominated patriarchal society to be sinful and in need of radical conversion (*metanoia*) if it is to

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88 Susie Orbach, „Wenn ich hungrig bin, esse ich (When I am hungry I eat)", In EMMA Nr. 2, März/April 2002, 51 [translation mine].

89 Elsa Tamez, "Women's Lives as Sacred Text," in *Women's Sacred Scriptures*, Concilium 1998/3, 62.

90 Susie Orbach, 51 [translation mine].

be saved."[91] The only difference is that many white women probably are not aware of this and may even help to establish and support this type of society.

In her marvellous comparison of a text as a "body" and a woman's body which, according to Tamez, "is always a living text,"[92] the body of a woman can reclaim its former God-given dignity: "God can be revealed directly from women's bodies, their sufferings, struggles, joys, and utopias."[93]It is thoroughly to be wished for that the white sisters may return to the wisdom of their Latin American sisters as well.

It is time that women act according to Ann Spurgeon's [a student of Rosemary Radford Ruether] parable of the *Naked Lady,* designing their own clothes according to their own wishes and needs: "New life sprang up among the women and they fashioned for themselves garments out of the clothing that had piled at the side of the road, each unique and sharing parts of each." [94]

There can be girls who are overindulged by their respective fathers and who will remain that type of princess described by Hans Christian Andersen in his fairy tale *The Princess and the Pea*, princesses who demand too much, because papa once had given them whatever they had liked. The price they have to pay might have been to remain his *little* girl all their lives (and particularly during *his* life).

The model for a successful father-daughter-relationship for me is that of the great poet Thomas Mann with his youngest daughter Elisabeth Mann Borgese (1918-

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91 Elsa Tamez, 57.

92 Ibid., 58.

93 Ibid., 63.

94 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Womanguides: Readings toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon, 1985), 251. (*Frauenbilder, Gottesbilder*, Gütersloh: Mohn, 1987), 390.

2002), the famous "Lady of the Oceans." She was Mann's favorite child and unlike those of her siblings who compared themselves with the famous father and ended in despair, some of whom taking drugs, committing suicide or simply lived on, deeply hurt, she represented a person who was at ease with herself. Her biographer Kerstin Holzer states: "She treated her origin in a matter-of-fact way, uninhibited by her over-powering father. That was easier for her than for her siblings, since she was his favorite."[95]

The same refers to Alma Mahler-Werfel, beloved daughter of the Viennese painter Emil Jakob Schindler. As she had been her father's favorite, so she became the favorite of the geniuses of her time. From early on she had but the highest self-esteem and a preference for extremely successful men. Her husbands and lovers were part of the celebrities of Europe: Gustav Mahler, the composer, who became her first husband; Oskar Kokoschka, the painter; Walter Gropius, Bauhaus architect, her second husband; Franz Werfel, poet, a third husband. Sarcastic commentators later called her the "widow of the four arts" (music, painting, architecture, literature). She was to be Kokoschka's *Windsbraut (Whirlwind)*, while Mahler dedicated his 8th symphony to her. But even those beloved daughters had a price to pay. Immediately before Alma's engagement to Mahler, he told her in a letter: "From now on you will only have one job [she had been composing music herself]: to make me happy! The roles have to be correctly applied. And there the role of the composer, the worker will be mine – and yours that of the loving companion, the understanding comrade. You

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95 Kerstin Holzer, „Das junge Lachen einer alten Dame (The Young Laughter of an Old Lady)" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 40, 17.02.02, 59.

must give yourself to me, unconditionally, as my property."[96] Again the Queen-Luise-model is the only one that can be applied and even a woman as self-confident as Alma gives in.

As it is my theory that children's and teenagers' books of the 19th century strengthened and supported patriarchy, the fact of being preferred and valued by the father can alleviate this process and enable women to experience their own merits to a certain degree.

How can this influence of patriarchy plus a destructive father be stopped in future? To my belief this can only be achieved by education and by providing girls and young women with new models which do not resound those of females dependent on fathers or husbands. Therefore it is most important to convince girls to become educated as much as possible, and the young women to be trained for a job which really fulfills them and does not just fill in a gap between school and marriage. The piece of advice Virginia Woolf gave to young women at Newnham and Girton College in Cambridge, Great Britain, in 1928 is still valid: "...when I ask you to earn money and have a room of your own, I am asking you to live in the presence of reality, an invigorating life."[97]

Henny Koch *Papas Junge (Papa's Boy)*

Contents

Elfriede Polten, aged 16, is the youngest daughter of widower Konrad Polten, aged 60. He is the owner of an estate. Her mother died after having given birth to four

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96 Friedemann Bedürftig, „Die Witwe der vier Künste (*The Widow of the Four Arts*)" in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 58, 9./10. 03. 02, III.

97 Virginia Woolf, *A Room Of One's Own* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1989), 110.

girls, two of them dying in their infanthood. Friedel lives in a rural household with her Aunt Lenchen or Lene, her father's sister, who strongly opposes the means of education her brother uses for his beloved youngest daughter, whom he calls "little boy." Friedel's older sister Lisa, the aunt's favorite, married a businessman and lives with him in Britain. Friedel (or Frieda as the aunt calls her because of the feminine ending – in German the name "Friedel" can be used for a man and a woman as well) has received no continuous education. She is a gifted violinist, paints nicely, but is not interested in learning and lives the life of boy in the countryside, shooting, riding, and climbing trees. Her sister arranges for a British governess, but Friedel gets the better of her, so the girl is sent to a boarding school. Here she charms teachers and boarders equally, delights everybody with her inspirations, but then decides that she has enough and returns home. She is sent to attend a sewing school nearby and learns to cook at home. Dancing classes are equally important, and complement her 'education'. On a journey to Switzerland where she stays with father, sister, and brother-in-law, by chance she meets her neighbor, who happens to be her brother-in-law's best friend. Frieda, now 17, becomes engaged to Klaus von Rödern, aged 34, and will be married at the age of 18.

Henny Koch's teenager novel *Papas Junge* was written at the very end of the 19th century. Its motto "Fermenting wine, hot blood, when they have bubbled up, things will be fine" is hard to endure for someone who lived through the 20th century, where blood stood for war, and where the "blood and soil" policy of the Nazis cost millions of lives. The "young blood" jokes then and today are connected with jovial elderly gentlemen who want to prove that they are still the potent philanderers of "better," but unfortunately bygone, times.

Unlike the other Silly Teenagers' Stories *Papas Junge* opens with a wedding. The bride is the 19 years old Anna Elisabeth, Lisa, Polten. She is her "mother's image, fair, *gentle*, delicate, feminine in every respect, in every fibre of her being."[98] Of course she is aunt Lenchen's favorite, whereas her sister Friedel, "the gypsy child with the dark curly hair and the gray sparkling eyes" is her father's favorite child, although of the wrong gender. "How intensely had he wished for a boy! Heaven had gifted him with three girls [nothing is said about the oldest two], the fourth child had and must be a boy. She had become 'his boy', although it was a girl again... In vain did aunt Lenchen seek to direct little Frieda ... to her destined purpose by dolls and knitted stockings."[99]

The novel's "tension" is grounded in the contrast of these two sisters, one of them representing the Queen-Luise-model, the other one a young girl, brought up with the privileges of a boy because her father could not endure another girl. Lisa's bridegroom is of the same age as his friend Klaus von Rödern, namely 34. Von Rödern is invited to the wedding because there is a lack of unmarried younger gentlemen and because he will be a future neighbor, owner of the estate next to the Poltens'. When the whole wedding party proposes a toast to the next bride – vivat sequens! – Friedel has no idea what it means, and it is the husband-to-be von Rödern who provides her with a glass for the toast. So similarly to *Backfischens Freuden und Leiden* the future husband is there right from the beginning. This enables the bride-to-be to take some modest "liberties," such as speaking in familiar terms on unapproved

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98 Henny Koch, *Papas Junge (Papa's Boy)* (Stuttgart: Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, n. d.), 29 [translation and italics mine].

99 Ibid., 29 [translation mine].

subjects like "marriage" (Friedel), or singling out a gentleman at a ball without having waited to be chosen by him (Gretchen at her first ball), which would have been regarded as highly improper behavior towards unfamiliar men.

Friedel's intellectual education is of no importance. The British governess Miss Miller is a woman of heart and understanding, but cannot 'tame' the girl and change her into a lady, according to the standards of the time. There are some witty scenes where Friedel is supposed to play Brahms *Lullaby* but instead of it plays a lively *Hungarian Czardas*. When the governess stresses that this is not the right piece, Friedel answers her by stringing together a litany of English words: "Brahm's little boy, pretty town, lovely girl, thunderstroke, necktie, handkerchief, very well indeed, ever since, long ago. Amen."[100] She uses the same system to impress aunt Lenchen with her 'progress' in the English language by telling her: " 'never mind – dreadful beast – thorny bush – sunny day – lovely weather – beautiful tree –Pears' Soap – Beecham's pills – ever yours' and concludes again with 'Amen.'"[101] It is hardly understandable that a person with such a limited knowledge of English can delight in Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*: "Phew, that was beautiful!"[102] The governess, who appreciates Friedel's courage when she rescued a little boy from climbing too high up a tree, who has a keen sense of humor and herself has been an only daughter among six brothers,[103] leaves when she has to acknowledge that she is unable to "cure" Friedel of her whims.

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100 Ibid., 45.
101 Ibid., 71.
102 Ibid., 75 [translation mine].
103 Ibid., 47.

The next step on the ladder of education is a boarding school. Friedel is sent there because of aunt Lenchen. When asked about her favorite author she answers: "'Well, to be sure, I don't like them at all... I always loved reading *Max and Moritz* [two cartoon figures by Wilhelm Busch, 1832 – 1908] best, by Busch, I believe,... yes, I really believe that Moritz [sic] Busch is my favorite poet.'"[104] From now on she learns about the poets of the German "Romantic School ...the period of Schlegel, Grimm, Tieck, Kleist and then inquired deeper into Chamisso [Adalbert von Chamisso, 1781 – 1838]. He [the professor for literature] read aloud from *Women's Love and Life*, and he read well."[105] The poems of this cycle (1830) describe the life of a woman and her different stages of life: "(1) Awakening of the girl to be a loving woman, (2) Exuberantly being in love, (3) Astonishment about the fact that the beloved one chose just her, (4) Spirits when looking at the engagement ring, (5) The happy bride ornaments herself for the wedding ceremony, (6) Emotions during the time of pregnancy, (7) Joys of motherhood, (8) Grief of the widow, (9) The old woman admonishes the daughter...to love."[106]

To teach this subject to sixteen year old girls at that time is astonishing, considering the prudishness of the age. But in a way the poems incorporate that sort of sentimentality which was supposed to be appropriate for the female education in some circles of society around the year 1900. In *Der Trotzkopf* Chamisso's songs [the poems were set to music by Robert Schumann, 1810 – 1856] are the explanation for

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104 Ibid., 100 [translation mine].

105 Ibid., 99 [translation mine].

106 Dr. Paul W. Wührl, „Frauen-Liebe- und Leben," in *Kindlers Literatur Lexikon*, vol. 9 (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1974), 3668 [translation mine].

Ilse why she suddenly longs for Leo Gontrau: "Away with the stupid thoughts, which made her uneasy and for which only *Chamisso's songs* were to blame."[107]

A.J.B. Hutchings finds an interesting interpretation in his essay *Schubert und das deutsche Lied (Schubert and the German Song)*, in which he refers to Schumann as well: "In general Schumann belongs to the full ardor of the romantic fever; his way is not only merely plastic and taking to heart; but deeply felt personally if not nearly pathological as has been claimed for the Chamisso cycle *Frauen-Liebe und Leben* occasionally."[108] It is the the music of the time of Romanticism which Friedel plays most of the time (Schubert, Schumann, Brahms, Chopin, Mendelssohn) in addition to Mozart. We never hear that she plays pieces by composers like Bach, works that have a clear emphasis on structure and methodology.

No wonder that the matter-of-fact Friedel chooses to break off her boarding school education. Henceforth there will be no further education other than sewing-, cooking- and dancing lessons and Friedel's final judgment is: "I am getting the creeps about pen and ink."[109]

Alice Miller speaks about the teacher as the "father substitute."[110] And although education does not play any important role in either novel, *Der Trotzkopf* and *Papas Junge*, it is the literature teacher who is treated and venerated like an omnipotent god: " 'He is awfully attractive!' Melanie assured and adoringly looked

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107 Emmy von Rhoden, 174 [translation and italics mine].

108 A.J.B. Hutchings, "Schubert und das deutsche Lied," in Alec Robertson und Denis Stevens, ed., *Geschichte der Musik* vol. III (Passau: Prestel, 1968), 145 (133-189)[translation mine).

109 Henny Koch, 212 [translation mine].

109 Alice Miller, *Am Anfang war Erziehung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 198.

up to the sky. 'This bewitching smile around his mouth, the sparkling, profound eye, the narrow, elegant face…'"[111] In *Papas Junge* it is the description of the Chamisso lesson: "Radiant eyes hung spellbound on his words; the girls were totally enthralled by the marvellous poetry and the brilliant lecture – breathlessly they all listened."[112]

To admire the father, to please the (male) teacher, this is what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls the "Athena complex," a complex that can exist between women scholars and their academic "fathers":

> I understand this expression in terms of a systematic analysis of domination …she [Athena] only appears to be motherless… Since Zeus … feared that Metis [Athena's mother, Goddess of Wisdom] would bear a child who would surpass him in wisdom and power, he changed her into a fly…swallowed Metis… and Athena emerged from the patriarchal godhead …Feminist scholars do not have the same power and standing in the academy as "doctorfathers" do. Hence young wo/men scholars must prove themselves to be the "daughters" of their intellectual academic father-mentors and must learn to understand themselves as the "motherless" offspring engendered from the brains of powerful "fathers".[113]

Indeed, both Ilse and Friedel are brought up "motherless" and, in a way, both of them deny their mothers in favor of their fathers.

At one isolated moment in *Papas Junge* there is a curious, though rather cursory, hint about the "question of women." Inge Dahlen, one of the girls attending the sewing- and dancing lessons, decides to become a teacher to please her sick and impoverished father. His explanation for his wish is astonishing indeed:

> There is so much talk about the women's question today. According to my opinion the only solution consists in every father letting his daughters have

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111 Emmy von Rhoden, 73 [translation mine].

112 Henny Koch, 99 [translation mine].

113 Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Sharing Her Word. Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Context* (Boston: Beacon, 1998), 14.

> the same education as his sons, envisaging a job for her as well. If fate decrees it that the daughter can fulfill the most beautiful and highest job of a woman, to preside over the own household at the side of a beloved husband, all very well. On the other hand she neither needs to marry an unloved man to be provided for, nor will she be a burden to the charity of others and be pushed around from one corner to the other, like an unloved piece of furniture.[114]

While this passage provides an insight into the lives of many women of this age, it nevertheless receives neither echo nor comment. Soon Inge herself dreams of better times than teaching, when she attends a ball on the Poltens' estate, given in lieu of Friedel's seventeenth birthday. It is difficult to determine the author's true intention about this passage, which seems to contradict the novel's general aims: a hardly educated girl's marriage at the "right" age (under twenty) to a suitable man (double her age).

Like in *Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden* and *Der Trotzkopf*, religion, its rituals and doctrines, are taken as a means of creating a special atmosphere. So when bride Lisa and her bridegroom enter the church the choir of schoolchildren sings "The Lord has done great things for us and we rejoiced," (Psalm 126:3)[115] which the pastor takes as a motto for his sermon, in the course of which he praises "...the character and activities of the young, motherless bride, who had been the good angel of her family and of the whole village. She had sown love in an overrich way and now she was justified to earn love. By leaving her father's house a light had faded away, a pure, clear, *gently* warming *flame*; but confidently her family might let her go, confidently put their gem into the hands of the chosen man; he would protect his treasure and

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114 Ibid., 300f. [translation mine].

115 Ibid., 5.

keep it in love and warmth, in happiness and sorrow."[116] Here again there is the *gentle flame* court chaplain Sack spoke about at Queen Luise's wedding. Even the famous Ruth-quotation "Where you go, I will go; your people shall be my people"(Ruth 1:16) is not spared. It has dwarfed into the illustration of a good wife's following her husband. There is no question of "your God [shall be] my God" (Ruth 1:16). The whole text has been used (or misused) in order to make Friedel understand her sister's saying farewell as a wife. The girl, however, counters: "Rubbish!... Ruth could happily go, she certainly did not have a father or a sister who loved her so much as papa and I do."[117]

Following the wedding, biblical quotations are only used to describe one of Friedel's fellow boarders, Gertrud, who is introduced as "our theologian [who] has the good or bad characteristic to produce biblical quotations for every fitting and unfitting opportunity."[118] For this she is continually reprimanded by "Shame on you." All but one of these quotations are taken from the Second Testament; "All who exalt themselves will be humbled (Matthew 23:12)," "...have your lamps lit (Luke 12:35)," "Here is truly an Israelite in whom there is no deceit (John 2:47)," "In my father's house are many dwelling places (John 14:2)," "Love another deeply from the heart (1 Peter1:22)." All of them are taken to illustrate everyday scenes.

Only one more quotation is derived from the First Testament: "The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork"(Psalm 19:2). This is the only passage which is not followed by an instantaneous "Shame on

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116 Ibid., 5 [translation and italics mine].
117 Ibid., 15 [translation mine].
118 Ibid., 92 [translation mine].

you" and is taken to illustrate the wonders of a moonlit night. One of the boarders, the most delicate one, Irmgard von Priesen, connects it with an astonishing interpretation: " 'For me the moon always is something like God's own eye. Serious and admonishing it rests upon me: Come up here, in your Father's house are many dwelling places' (John 14:2). Irmgard's soft voice had said it. Her little lily-face was turned towards the moon and in its shimmer it looked supernaturally delicate and transfigured."[119] Again we find a trace of that death-wish adolescents like Nellie (*Trotzkopf*) or children like Nora and Elsli (*Gritlis Kinder*) had. But here the reaction of the bystanders is very mundane. Irmgard's friend asks for a scarf in order to protect her from too early a journey into the celestial spheres.

There is no genuine craving for God as I had shown in Ottilie Wildermuth's novel and all of Johanna Spyri's novels. Wildermuth and Spyri write of a yearning for God, though we may not agree with the result. In the *Silly Teeenagers' Stories* we can find neither. God is taken for granted and not put to question. Christian religious rituals are used for enhancing a situation just like elaborate flower arrangements can enhance a feast.

The similarities between these stories consist in the typology of the future husbands. All of them are nearly double the age of their brides, apart, perhaps, from Leo Gontrau. Dr. Hausmann is a civil servant, Leo Gontrau an attorney of law, Werner Horst (Lisa's husband) is a businessman and only Klaus von Rödern is wealthy enough to do no regular work but instead to travel around the world. Baron von Senft, Eugenie's husband, is a man of means, too. All men come from a

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119 Ibid., 118 [translation mine].

background where there is enough money. There is a difference between "first-class-husbands" like those mentioned above and "second-class-husbands" like Dr. Althoff, the teacher (*Der Trotzkopf*), and Marie's husband, a pastor (*Backfischchens Freuden und Leiden*). Those gentlemen possess sufficient means but no glamour, although that is substituted by their learning.

Three of the "main" protagonists, Dr. Hausmann, Baron von Senft, and Klaus von Rödern "rescue" their future wives from akward situations that prove the women's "neediness." Klaus von Rödern has to protect Fridel against an ox (a situation although not as dramatical as Eugenie's "rescue" from the bull), and Friedel justly comments: "Fleeing from an ox, she, Friedel Polten, papa's boy."[120] In another case where she has an attack of vertigo, she refuses his help, telling him: "Nonsense..., my father's boy is no weakling."[121] Both cases illustrate that, although she had managed similar situations before, from now on Friedel cannot do without male protection. Although she had never known vertigo before, she is unable now to do anything but crawl on hand and feet over the small bridge across the mountain brooklet. While she was brought up with cattle, she now needs a man to deal with the situation. But she is to become a "real" woman, and a woman has to do with headaches like Lisa (p. 241) and vertigo, and has to be afraid of large animals, she has to be a *damsel in distress*.

Another situation brings the final proof of Friedel's neediness, a matter of life and death so-to-speak. When climbing the mountains in the early hours of the day, where Friedel had tried to find edelweiss, Klaus von Rödern had followed and rescued

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120 Ibid., 264 [translation mine].

her. His comment: "A benevolent fate granted me to guide the reckless human being out of danger, back to life, to the sun, to her family, to whom she is life, light, and sun..."(Psalm 84:11).[122] Friedel reacts to this pompous address like a scolded schoolchild: "Friedel's little head had sunk deeper and deeper." His own explanation why had followed her at all is : "He did not want to disturb her, only *protect* her against anything that might happen."[123]

The wise father-figure has to guide the immature woman. Both women, Lisa and Friedel, have particular roles to fulfill and these are typical for 19th century women, just as these roles were perpetuated later. Lisa, the angelic and mothering type, the "safe" woman, is the one who provides the feminine touch. Even in their Swiss inn she acts according to this role: "'What a charming place. You shall see how I make it comfortable for us.' And in the spur of a moment she had taken cushions out of the suitcases which she had taken with her as a precaution – and the whole room breathed an atmosphere of coziness and well-being."[124] To carry cushions from Britain to Switzerland is not seen as utterly silly but as something entirely adequate. And of course it is she who waters the flowers in the inn, reproaching her sister for not doing so.

But Friedel's role is different. She is to be the entertaining element for middle aged men (husband-to-be) and old men (father; visitor): "'This girl is really like a tonic from a fresh forest spring, no wonder that her father looks so fresh and full of strength. If one could but have such a fountain of youth at one's side!' And the

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121 Ibid., 247 [translation mine].
122 Ibid., 277 [translation mine].
123 Ibid., 273 [translation and italics mine].

speaker, a dried old bachelor, sighed."[125] Of course he is a professor. Education dries up, is the message.

To be a "fountain of youth," a remedy against old age and mid life crises, was (and still is) a reason, why wives had to be young enough to pass as their husbands' daughters. They were (and are) to be a bulwark against the misery of getting older and – of course – the means to secure a nurse in times of ailment.

Gisela Wilkending presents another interesting aspect: "...These books [the *Silly Teenagers' Stories*] stick to the contrast between a childlike youthfulness of the 16 – 18 year old bride and the older bridegroom, and thus work particularly hard against social change. Above all they counter the endeavors of the emancipation of women. In *Papas Junge* by Henny Koch the low standard of education of the girl causes a special erotic attraction."[126]

I myself would not underline the lack of education as particularly erotic. To me it seems to be the educational trait in itself which will provide the husband with a God-like position, someone who will be always in the right. If I had to look for a particularly erotic element provided in the "fountain of youth" it would be the father-daughter-complex. All the three books concern a widowed father and an orphaned daughter. This situation can be only resolved when the daughter marries, in short, when the plot turns into a triangular relationship. Eugenie's father married a second time, but married the wrong woman. So Eugenie can continue her raptures about her father's portrait: " 'Little father! My only beloved little father!' she cried with an

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124 Ibid., 240 [translation mine].
125 Ibid., 236 [translation mine].
126 Gisela Wilkending, 241 [translation mine].

affectionate voice. 'Now I possess you again, although you are so far away from your poor, funny Jenny [Eugenie]...you terrible, terrible, dear papa!'"[127] Ilse Macket (*Der Trotzkopf*) implores her father when she leaves for the boarding school: "Mama [the stepmother] shall not write to me. I only want to have your letters! She is not to read my letters to you as well!"[128] Friedel (*Papas Junge*) charms her father: "He met one of her roguish looks. She went to him, sat on the armrest of his chair and put the arms so softly and tenderly around his neck that he felt pleased from the bottom of his heart. 'Let the governess come, little father, we will turn her out together, we two. I will rescue you your boy.'"[129] And this father is so convinced his daughter will never leave him that when he has to face the fact, "Papa saw it open-mouthed. He stared at the two [bride and bridegroom] like a miracle, and then fell into his chair, he felt quite shaky on his legs."[130]

Daughters speaking in besotted tones of their fathers, fathers responding like lovers, does not seem to have been a problem at that time. And there exactly lies the problem. Even the second wife (Eugenie's or Ilse's stepmother) or a sister who runs the household (aunt Lenchen) were apparently powerless women. So Gisela Wilkending justly stresses the

> oedipal father-daughter-relationship and the romanticizing of an image of femininity connected with a marked anti-intellectualism. ... Henny Koch ...very precisely is out for a pubescent conflict of replacement. That explains her success... She interprets naïve feelings of dependence and powerlessness as female together with most of her contemporaries and contrasts them with an ostensible male feeling of independence and omnipotence... The wife, the

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127 Clementine Helm, 107 [translation mine].
128 Emmy von Rhoden, 20 [translation mine].
129 Henny Koch, 39 [translation mine].
130 Ibid., 314 [translation mine].

'good comrade': with this formula endeavors for the emancipation of women will be put under the tutelage of men even before the turn of the century.[131]

Again it is the harmless woman which is sought after, and again this is managed best if the woman is married in her adolescence and receives as little education as possible. Otherwise the "fountain of youth" might change into a dangerous source of wisdom and knowledge. The biblical Eve proved how lethal this craving for knowledge was. Therefore she had to be minimized into a weak being, easily to be convinced, influenced, seduced. And although it was really Adam who turned into someone under influence by taking and eating the fruit from her, *she* was punished and told "*he* shall rule over you."(Genesis 3:16)

Adrienne Rich finds another interpretation for the 'safe' or harmless woman: "'Motherliness' is split off from both sexual attractiveness (the temptress) and 'motherhood' (the powerful Goddess) and is acceptable in its 'nurturing, selfless, self-sacrificing' form: thus in the fourteenth century the Virgin Mary could be worshipped while living women were brutalized and burnt as witches."[132]

By reducing a woman's role to a mere mother role and depriving her of a sexuality of her own, Mary could become what Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza calls the "Beloved Daughter of the Father(s)," "and the symbol of humble obedience serves to religiously inculcate normal women with dependency, subordination, and inferiority."[133] In addition, I believe it inoculates them with a guilty conscience, too. When in 1978 I wanted to return to teaching Religious Education four(!) lessons per

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131 Gisela Wilkending, 243 [translation mine].

132 Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton, 1986), 114f.

week our then pastor told me he was going to pray for me to make the "right" decision (clearly meaning "to stay at home"), because my daughter was two years old and would be looked after by our neighbor, whereas my son was "safe" in kindergarden. Laden with guilt I resumed teaching nevertheless, bringing about a magnificent (and still existing) friendship with our neighbor. This neighbor, who had never had children of her own, became a third grandmother to both my children. Humans should stop splitting up the world into "good" and "bad" mothers and instead of it "design clothes" for each of us, with child or without, and abandon the old, male-made roles of the safe, motherly woman.

Worse, still, though the Silly Teenagers' Novels have abandoned the mother altogether; it is the fathers who step in. Apart from being a hindrance on the way of female emancipation these apparently sanctioned father-daughter-relationships of the 19th century bear the danger of incest, or at least mellow the danger of incest. How very deeply the longing for incest can influence the life of the adult is shown by Sigmund Freud's interpretation of Gustav Mahler's marriage to Alma Maria Schindler. Here we find both, the "safe" woman as well as the virginal mother. Mahler went to Freud for help because his marriage was in danger. Freud not only told him that he, Mahler, was suffering from a "Mary complex" because "for once apparently he still wanted to see the virgin in Alma and secondly his mother's name must have been Maria. So it was. Mahler was stupefied, since in fact he had wanted to call Alma by her second name Maria in the beginning. This direct hit was followed by another one, even more painful: 'Your mother,' Freud said, 'was careworn and

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[133] Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus, Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet: Critical Issues in*

suffering and unconsciously you wanted to find these traits in your wife as well.' And really Mahler remembered the first years of his marriage where he had wished Alma to be more suffering. But Freud aquiescened him with regard to his age [Mahler was 41, when he married; Alma 22], this would make him particularly desirable for someone '*looking for a father*' like Alma."[134]

The harmless woman, the "safe" woman, the girl who is a "fountain of life" are the models the Silly Teenagers' Stories provide. The result is disastrous and extends to today's society. Until the present day women have to model themselves according to male wishes in order to be accepted. Under the title *Don't forget you are a lady* the German magazine for women *Brigitte* reports about a Swiss school where girls learn how to behave properly in the world of the so-called high society. "The 'finishing' subjects are conversation, cooking, and history of art apart from table manners. English is on the program, to adopt the correct tone with regard to the personnel. The arranging of flowers and dinners, the choice of the right perfume."[135] What a program at the end of the 20th century and what image of women!

So the question to be asked is: What then has changed in the 20th century? Has the Students' Movement in the late sixties achieved a new understanding of the role for women and girls? Has liberation taken place? And if, who has benefited from it? Are there new role models?

Feminist Christology (New York: Continuum, 1999), 164.

134 Friedemann Bedürftig, „Die Witwe der vier Künste" [translation and italics mine].

135 Silja Ukena, "Vergessen Sie nicht, Sie sind eine Dame"(Don't Forget You Are A Lady), *Brigitte* 5/ 99, (111-117) [translation mine].

V

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN THE SEVENTIES

timeless, adj: **2a**: having no beginning or end: ETERNAL, INTERMINABLE, UNENDING, **b**: not restricted to a particular time or date: DATELESS

education, n: **1c** : a conditioning, strengthening, or disciplining esp of the mind or faculties … **3**: the product of an education: the totality of knowledge, skill, competence, or qualities of character gained by education

fit, vb: **2d**: to bring to a required form and size: shape rightly: adapt to a model

Children's Literature in the Seventies

Michael Ende's *Momo*, written in 1973, has become a classic in Germany. Before I left the country in fall 2002 for my last two semesters in Cambridge, I saw new prints of the book in all the bookstores. Is it that in times of great distress (an impending World War, a worldwide economic recess, global ecological problems) human beings like to return to what has been approved thirty years ago? Is it because of the "timeless" topics Ende uses in this novel about time?

I shall begin with an analysis of Ende's technique of storytelling as well as of the timeless topics he uses. As these topics are linked with humankind they are biblical topics as well. So I shall contrast them to their biblical equivalents: Jesus' temptations and his salvation of the world. I shall look into the theme 'innocence' from an Asian Feminist perspective. My final step will consist in exploring an explanation for *Momo*'s success.

In the second part of this chapter I shall deal with another children's classic, the Austrian Christine Nöstlinger's *Konrad oder das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse*. This includes Nöstlinger's main topic, education. I shall give a close look into Nöstlinger's

portrayal of women as mothers and teachers and find out to what degree religion plays a role in this novel.

In the final part of this chapter I shall ask what has remained of the seventies by looking at them from a sociological and political point of view. I shall contrast my findings of the situation in the Germany of today and end with an outlook into the future.

Michael Ende *Momo oder Die seltsame Geschichte von den Zeit-Dieben und von dem Kind, das den Menschen die gestohlene Zeit zurückbrachte. Ein Märchen-Roman (Momo Or the Strange Story of the Time Thieves and of the Child Who Brought Back the Stolen Time to Humankind). A Fairy Tale-Novel*

Contents

Momo, a girl of uncertain age – between eight or twelve years – lives on her own in the ancient amphitheater of a big town somewhere in the South. She makes friends with some people, particularly children, who provide her with food. In exchange Momo gives them her greatest gift: listening to their problems or encouraging them to make up stories themselves. She never gives advice but it seems that those people to whom she listens can sort out and thus solve their problems, may they be young or old. Her greatest friends are the old Beppo, a street-sweeper, and the young Gigi (Girolamo), a guide and storyteller.

Apart from the gift of listening, Momo disposes of the gift of creativity, particularly by playing with the children. All seems well until gray gentlemen appear, whose sole goal it is to steal the lifetime of human beings by betraying them to work more and more. The gray gentlemen dispose of a "time-saving bank." But it does not benefit the time-saving humans. The saved time is the only means of existence for the gray gentlemen. Without it they dissolve. By playing tricks on the humans and lying to

them they gradually change the lives of everybody in the town. All joy, all friendship has gone, and even the children have become haunted figures in the daily struggle of doing something "reasonable" and timesaving.

The gray gentlemen approach Momo, whom they detect as their worst enemy, by coaxing and threatening her. But she resists and is in danger of her own life. A particularly gifted tortoise with the name of Kassiopeia shows her the way to Master Hora, steward of all time. He explains the connection between the gray gentlemen, human beings, and time to her. When Momo returns to the town, ready to enlighten all of her friends about the gray gentlemen, she finds out that she is utterly alone. The gray gentlemen force her to show them the way to Master Hora but cannot approach him. Hora devises a plan to rescue humankind by the help of Momo, but its failure includes the destruction of the world. Nevertheless Momo agrees and finds the place where the gray gentlemen store the stolen saved time. By setting it free the gentlemen dissolve and the town can return to genuine time, truth, and friendship.

The book has been published in English under the title *Momo* by Doubleday, in 1984, and under the title *The Grey Gentlemen* by Viking Penguin Press in 1986.

The author Michael Ende lived from 1929 till 1995. His father was the painter of surrealist paintings, Edgar Ende, who was hindered from painting by the Nazis, as was his fellow countryman Emil Nolde (1867-1956). Ende's mother Luise was a physiotherapist. A mother with a profession is new compared to those featured in the biographies of 19th century's novel writers, and here it was the woman who had to sustain the family.

Ende was educated at the renowned German Otto Falckenberg School for Drama in Munich. So he acted, but wrote as well. His first *Jim Knopf* (*Jim Button*) novels

(1960) became a great success. Every child in Germany of that time knew *Jim Knopf und die wilde Dreizehn* (*Jim Button and the Wild Thirteen*), either as a book, a radio production or a TV series.

Momo

Momo was published in 1973 and became *the* cult-book of the seventies, similar to the *Unendliche Geschichte* (*The Neverending Story*) in 1979. It was translated into more than twenty languages, made into a film, and was awarded with the Deutscher Jugendbuchpreis (German Prize for a Youth Book).

This success is due to Ende's brilliant way of storytelling certainly, which links elements of a detective novel (Momo chased by the gray gentlemen), religious traits (Momo as the town's and humankind's liberator), and those of fairy tales (a tortoise sending messages in print). But there is more. Ende in the role of the author tries to dissociate from Momo's story. In the author's afterword he claims that this novel has been told to him by a travel companion during a nightly railway journey. He even quotes the mysterious stranger whose age varies between a very old and a very young man: "I [the stranger] told you [the author] all this as if it had happened already. I equally could have narrated it as if it was going to happen in the future. This does not make a big difference to me."[1] It is interesting that Ende does not use this as a foreword, but instead of it employs an unusually long and differentiated title. Title plus afterword already comprise the novel's elements: the danger, brought about by the gray gentlemen, the main topic – time – which seems to be exchangeable concerning past, present or future, as the afterword confirms, and the child who rescues humankind.

Above this the generic concept is a construct as well. Usually stories are either fairy tales or novels. This story is both.

The afterword assures that this story was *given* to the author and therefore it can be concluded that it cannot be his property. Thus it reaches into the realm of common property, exactly as fairy tales are everybody's property. The process of storytelling links together both: the stranger and the person who is told the story. By reading it, every reader is equally linked to it. Thus the act of telling and re-telling creates community and – at its best - a bondage between human beings. The author lets us know that at the time *he* was told the story, he himself was on a great tour. At the same time he emphasizes that this "tour" has not yet found its end. Here again past, present, and future are seen as interchangeable elements.

The same technique of indefiniteness is adapted for the location of the story. The beginning of the book links both, time and location, when it speaks of "old, old times when human beings spoke in totally different languages, there already were great and splendid towns in warm countries… And above all there were big theaters… One called them amphitheaters… Since then millenia passed. The big towns of that time decayed… And in such a town the story of Momo came to pass."[2] The third trait introduced in the opening of the novel is that of communication through storytelling. The former amphitheaters brought those together who were interested in theater, in stories. "The theaters were such as the people could afford. But all of them wanted to have one,

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1 Michael Ende, *Momo oder Die seltsame Geschichte von den Zeit-Dieben und von dem Kind, das den Menschen die gestohlene Zeit zurückbrachte. Ein Märchen-Roman* (Stuttgart: Thienemann, 1973), 268 [translation mine].

2 Ibid., 7f. [translation mine].

because they were passionate listeners and lookers-on."[3] Not only were the buildings dilapidated, the gift of listening will undergo a decay as well in the course of the novel.

Its great subjects: time, truth and betrayal, liberation and redemption are biblical topics, although Ende never uses the word "God." The only person with a God-like quality – apart from Momo, the Christ figure – is master Hora or "Secundus Minutius Hora" as is his full name, allusive to "seconds, minutes, hours." But Hora himself emphasizes that : "I am only the steward. My duty is it to assign every human being that time which is appointed to him."[4] He does not say whose steward he is or who appoints the time to the humans. He only stresses that animals have a different sort of time. The tortoise Kassiopeia[5] "...is a being outside time. She carries her own little time in herself."[6] Hora clearly states: "You see, if there will be no time any longer, then I myself cannot wake up again. And then the world would remain still and rigid in all eternity."[7] What he can dispose of is only *one* hour of time which he wants to give to Momo to enable her to rescue the world. So Hora's eternity is a timeless, lifeless, endlessness and has nothing in common with

> the home of God .. among mortals, (where God)
> will dwell with them;
> they will be his peoples,
> and God himself will be with them;
> he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
> Death will be no more.[8]

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3 Ibid., 7 [translation mine].

4 Ibid., 158 f. [translation mine].

5 The name *Kassiopeia* is taken from the Greek mythology. Kassiopeia is the beautiful but arrogant queen of Ethiopia. The punishment of the God's claim the sacrifice of her daughter Andromeda whom Perseus frees. But Kassiopeia is scheming again. So Poseidon transforms her into a star. There is no evidence that the tortoise may guide Momo because of a similarity to Andromeda.

6 Ibid., 245 [translation mine].

7 Ibid., 243 [translation mine].

8 Revelation 21:3f.

This is the reason why the human beings in *Momo* must make most of this life in a positive sense, since there is no God and no time of fulfillment equalling that of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:6).

To the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann the presumption of eternity as the fulfillment of time is linked with life eternal: "Life eternal… wants to be a 'life of fulfillment,' a life that is finally so completely filled by God's inexhaustible liveliness, a life that has become so intact has and turned out so well, that there is no restlessness of a melancholy remembrance and no urging hope left any longer."[9]

The connection of time and life is seen in *Momo* as well: "Time is life. And life lives in the heart."[10] There is even a strait comparable to Jesus' temptation in the desert:

> Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. 3 The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, 'one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, 6 saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels, concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor, 9 and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'"(Matthew 4:1-10)

The temptation to always have enough bread for onself and for others is to be found in a slightly altered way. Momo's friend Benno Street-Sweep is the person in the novel, who – apart from Momo – lives for absolute truth. His slow speech is an expression "that he took so much time because he never wanted to say the

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[9] Jürgen Moltmann, „Ewigkeit" in Hans Jürgen Schultz, ed. *Theologie für Nichttheologen. ABC protestantischen Denkens* (Stuttgart: Kreuz-Verlag, 1968), 94f. [translation mine]. (90-95)

untruthfulness. Because according to his opinion all misfortune had its origin in the many lies, the intentional ones, but the unintentional as well, which only come into being because of hurry or inaccuracy."[11] When his lonely search for the disappeared Momo (who is under the tutelage of Master Hora at that time) makes him end up in a lunatic asylum, he becomes untrue to his principles in order to rescue Momo. The gray gentlemen pretend to have achieved control over Momo. They promise him her freedom if he starts saving time for them: "So, think of it: complete secrecy and one hundred thousand hours. The very moment we have those you will get back little Momo."[12] Secrecy and silence have been characteristic features of dictatorships. They functioned under Hitler's as well as Stalin's regime. In order to rescue Momo, Beppo Street-Sweep negates his own principles. When in his times with Momo he gave the advice: "One must not think of the whole street at once. … One has to think of the next step only, the next breath, the next sweepbrush,"[13] he now works in order to save time for the gray gentlemen and hates his work for the first time in his life. He knows that: "had it concerned himself only, he had rather starved than becoming untrue to himself. But it dealt with Momo whom he had to ransom."[14] Beppo Street-Sweep does not want to have "bread" for himself, but for others. To come to terms with evil for the sake of redeeming others is the greatest temptation possible, and she or he who does it, will come to lose everything.

The temptations for Gigi (or Girolamo as is his full name), the guide, are different. He is a passionate storyteller, but the quality of his stories changes when he

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10 Ende, *Momo*, 57 [translation mine].
11 Ende, 36 [translation mine].
12 Ibid., 182f. [translation mine].
13 Ibid., 37 [translation mine].
14 Ibid., 183 [translation mine].

comes to know Momo: "His stories had walked by foot, so to speak, but since he knew Momo they suddenly had got wings."[15] He is altered so much by the child whom he dearly loves: "If Momo was among the listeners, he got the impression as if a sluice was opened in his inner, and new inventions streamed and bubbled without his thinking about them."[16] Gigi Guide is full of enthusiasm to rescue the town from the time-devouring gray gentlemen whom he naïvely underestimates. He dreams of fame. The parable of *King Xaxotraxolus and Empress Strapazia* which he told his audience in his early times, will become his own. As Empress Strapazia is greedy for power and gold and is betrayed of both by the king who makes her believe that his little whale once will grow to become a big goldfish which will provide her with endless resources of gold, so "the dreamer Gigi became the liar Girolamo."[17] Without his knowledge the gray gentlemen provide him with a regular job in radio and television. His stories change, as he has no time to think of new ones. He loses his creativity when he tells the last of those stories, which formerly were Momo's property, among them a fairy tale describing their love.

After a minute attempt to convey the truth to his audience, the gray gentlemen remorselessly remind him: "You are nothing… We made you.. we pumped you up. But if you give us trouble, then we will let out the air of you again. Or do you seriously believe that you have to thank yourself and your minor talent for what you are at present?"[18] And although he starts hating his job, he continues telling mediocre stories but not the truth. So the third temptation Jesus suffered was Gigi's and he surrendered. He bitterly circumscribes his situation and his anxieties to Momo, who wants to contact

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15 Ibid., 43 [translation mine].
16 Ibid., 46 [translation mine].
17 Ibid., 177 [translation mine].

her former best friend: "To be poor without dreams – no, Momo, that is hell."[19] Girolamo is unable to see that it is worse to come to terms with evil and lose one's self-respect.

For Momo the gray gentlemen use a different technique. When Momo, Benno Street-Sweep, and Gigi Guide find out that the children's parents accuse them to be "sluggards and loafers,"[20] who therefore have to be avoided, the three can convince the children that this is an unjust bias. So the children decide to come again. From the time-saving point of view of the gray gentlemen this is an enormous challenge. "Children" – as they know – "are our natural enemies" and continue that "nobody is so dangerous for our work as just children."[21] They want the children to do something "useful" and not "waste" their time by playing, but Momo stands for creative games. So they present "Bibigirl, the perfect doll"[22] to Momo, hoping that she will forget the real children about it. Bibigirl can speak, but the sentences are repetitive: "I belong to you…, all will envy you because of me … I want to have more things." So Momo soon gets bored, "an emotion she never had had before."[23] One gray gentlemen tells her how happy she has to be because of that doll which needs loads of dresses, cosmetics, sports equipment and whose companion is "Bubiboy" [Bubi, German colloquial for "little boy" or a male acting like that]. The similarities to Barbie-doll and all her entourage are obvious. And the gray gentleman makes his intentions quite clear: "You don't need your friends any longer, do you understand?"[24] He is horrified, when Momo answers: "I think one cannot love her [the doll]." When he tries to convince Momo that perhaps inadvertedly she

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18 Ibid., 175 [translation mine].
19 Ibid., 207 [translation mine].
20 Ibid., 78 [translation mine].
21 Ibid., 116 [translation mine].
22 Ibid., 88 [translation mine].

may bring harm about her children friends because she herself is the only not time-saving person meanwhile he nearly wins, but then Momo remembers her own experiences with time-saving adults in her surroundings, who had changed and became harassed personalities. So in her simplicity she instinctively accentuates what is missing in the gray gentlemen's system, when she asks him: "Does nobody love you?"[25] This question leads to a complete breakdown of her opponent. It forces him to speak the truth about his and the other gentlemen's doings: "We suck you dry until your bones… And we need more [time]… much more … because we as well become more… constantly more."[26]

Because of speaking the truth the gray gentleman will be brought to a criminal court, again similarly to the biblical judgement. He will be accused of treason. His punishment will be his own dissolution, and his cries for mercy will be wasted.

When the gray gentlemen approach Momo a second time, she has just found out that all her friends deserted her. They are doing 'useful' work meanwhile. Not even the tortoise Kassiopeia is around. So Momo has no one to speak to. Now she lives under extreme conditions of loneliness, just as Jesus did in the wilderness: "She felt as if she was locked into a treasury cave of immeasurable riches, which increased and threatened to choke her. And there was no escape! Nobody could force his way to her and she could not draw attention to herself, deeply buried under a mountain of time," and learns that human beings need to share: "There are riches which lead to one's destruction if one cannot share them with others."[27] After Momo realizes this she has no fear any

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23 Ibid., 89 [translation mine].
24 Ibid., 93 [translation mine].
25 Ibid., 96 [translation mine].
26 Ibid., 97 [translation mine].
27 Ibid., 214 [translation mine].

longer. *She* wants to meet the gray gentlemen now and they agree. A scene similar to the judgement scene takes place. Again all the gray gentlemen are assembled. When in the judgement scene the locality was a garbage *mountain*, it is now an enormous *square*. Here again seems to be a resemblance to the biblical Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:1ff.) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:17ff.), only under opposite conditions: It is not the Good speaking up, Jesus, but Evil, personified by the gray gentlemen. They offer Momo a deal: If she leads them to Master Hora, she and her friends will be free. They need Hora in order to become the absolute rulers of human time. When Momo informs them that only the tortoise Kassiopeia is able to find the way to Master Hora, the gray gentlemen leave her alone as she is of no use to them any longer. They concentrate to find Kassiopeia, but as she is a being outside their system they cannot find her.

The last but greatest similarity to the Second Testament is that between Jesus as the savior of the world (Luke 2:11) and Momo who rescues the time. Both of them do not attempt power for the sake of power, both of them do not act for their own sake. As Jesus enables a new beginning for humankind, so Momo liberates the people from the evil of the gray gentlemen. In a dramatic scene Hora makes Momo acquainted with the deadly consequences of the "necrotic, ghostlike time of the gray gentlemen."[28] He compares them to a creeping illness: "At first you don't notice much. One day you don't feel inclined to do anything at all. Nothing interests you, everything gets on your nerves… You become quite indifferent and gray… There is no wrath and no

[28] Ibid., 241 [translation mine].

enthusiasm…This illness is called: deadly boredom."[29] Momo is to re-start the world. She agrees in liberating the stolen time which the gray gentlemen store in enormous underworld elevators. Her only assistance are Kassiopeia, the message sending tortoise, and an hour flower which Master Hora gives to her. The flower enables Momo to open the doors of the time-saving elevators and to set free a "storm of sheer liberated time."[30] Time and life can start again. But things have altered. Unlike Grimm's fairy tale of *Brier Rose* where everybody starts doing exactly what he or she was about a hundred years before: "The roast began to sizzle again, and the cook gave the kitchen boy such a box on the ear that he let out a cry, while the maid finished plucking the chicken,"[31] people in *Momo* start having time again and enjoying it.

Momo's sole "weapons" are innocence and love. But innocence and love are the two characteristics demanded of females since time immemorial. They were the reason why girls had to marry young in the 19th century and before, they were and are the essentials required of girls and women even today. This construct is typical of the Western Christian world. Rita Nakashima Brock shows a different aspect when she speaks about the perspective of women in the novels of Asian American women:

> Innocence is something one outgrows, or else one risks remaining superfluous and disempowered…Innocence may be appropriate to babies, but innocence in men is foolish – and the women in these works see it as dangerous to themselves. Hence, innocence is not described as lost, but as rejected because it leads to victimization. Innocence is not a survival skill. It does not nurture and empower life or pass it on. Cunning, wits, tolerance for ambiguity, manipulation, imagination, moral reflection, and active agency are the survival skills that emerge with the rejection of innocence and the ripening of wisdom.[32]

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29 Ibid., 242 [translation mine].

30 Ibid., 263 [translation mine].

31 Jack Zipes, *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, vol. 1, 205.

32 Rita Nakashima Brock, "Dusting the Bible on the Floor: A Hermeneutics of Wisdom" in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, ed. *Searching the Scripture*, vol. 1: *A Feminist Introduction* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 66.

Momo is neither cunning, nor ambiguous. She stands for truth and love solely. In this way she is not a liberating model for girls. She stands for a fairy tale world, where the Good will conquer Evil in the end. This has been the eternal female trap: If only *I* will be good/ faithful/ loving I can change the world. The German tract stories of the 19th century have shown this belief, *Momo* is another proof for the 20th century. Because of this women endure to be beaten by their husbands or partners like that woman I came to know who had been battered for twenty-seven years. When I speechlessly asked her why she had endured all this she told me: "Why, because my husband went to the church choir every Friday night and I did so hope that the songs he sang would finally reach his heart." She was unable to see that she alone had fostered his ego, that he would shrivel and lose his power the very moment she left him.

Momo's success cannot be explained by similarities to biblical stories in a world that no longer knows about them. It is not explained by Ende's excellent intertwining of different forms and devices of narration. It is the language he uses. What could be said of Johanna Spyri and her way of describing landscape as "landscape of the soul" can be said of Ende's use of language. When Momo is introduced to the origin of time, Ende uses pictures of breathtaking beauty. He describes a "star pendulum" in "golden twilight" bringing huge blossoms into bloom.[33] For the description of these blossoms and the light surrounding them Ende invents a language where color, music, planets, metal, words form a synthesis:

> ...the sound became more and more clear and radiant. Momo guessed that this was the ringing light that called forth and created each of the blossoms in a different, always unique and non-repeatable form from the depths of the dark water... But then there were no human voices, but it sounded as if gold and silver and all other metals sang... Momo listened to words of a language she had never heard before but which she understood nevertheless. There

[33] Ende, 161 [translation mine].

were sun and moon and the planets and all the stars, which revealed their own, their real names.[34]

Again there is the fairy tale and mythology motif of the "real name," which enables authenticity and has to be protected. And only in this context Ende succeeds in constructing new words himself. When the overwhelmed Momo seeks refuge with Master Hora, his hands touch her eyes "snow-gently."[35] Spyri's bewitching "landscape of the soul" finds its equivalent in Ende's synthesizing use of language.

Although the accusation is justified that Ende escaped into fantasy with his second famous book *Die unendliche Geschichte (The Neverending Story)*, 1979, this cannot be said of *Momo*, despite of the fairy tale traits. The subject of the dangerous gray gentlemen is not a fairy tale subject, solely. It describes the reality of *this* world, our world. For Germany in particular, after the great political upheavals and expectations of the sixties, then years later the country was in a state of lethargy. Making money was one of the poignant topics again. So the menace of the time-devouring gray gentlemen had become reality.

Children and Adolescents' Literature after 1968
Christine Nöstlinger

The Austrian author Christine Nöstlinger, born in Vienna in 1936, is a highly successful contemporary writer. She received awards for her numerous books not only in Austria, but in Switzerland and Germany as well. Nöstlinger received great acclaim with the Hans-Christian-Andersen medal and other important international distinctions.

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34 Ibid., 163 f. [translation mine].
35 Ibid., 164 [translation mine].

Her biography is another proof for a general change in thinking. Here again her biographers not only mention a mother, but a working mother as well. Her mother was a kindergarten teacher, her father a watchmaker. After her matriculation exam Nöstlinger's first choice was to become a painter, but then she decided against it. She married a journalist and had two daughters. We are told that she started writing because she was bored with conventional children's books.[36] Another story tells that she illustrated a children's book she had written herself and that the editors liked the texts better than the illustrations.[37] So she not only wrote children's and adolescents' books but illustrated some of them as well. Today she lives in Vienna and on a farm in Lower Austria.

Christine Nöstlinger

Konrad oder das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse (Konrad or the Child from the Can)

Contents

Berti Bartolotti is an artist who weaves carpets. She lives on her own and is not interested in other people's opinion. Her mania is to subscribe for so many special offers that she loses track. So she is not surprised when she receives a parcel which contains the instant child Konrad. This is the most perfectly educated seven year old child, which complicates Frau Bartolotti's until then unorthodox life tremendously.

When it turns out that Konrad was sent to her only by mistake and that she is to return the boy, she, the girl Kitti, who lives in the same house, and Frau Bartolotti's gentleman friend, Herr Egon, try everything to keep the child, because each of them established a genuine relationship with the instant child.

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36 http://www.Stuttgart.de/chilias/literatur/ant_m-r/noestling/bio.htm/22/04/04.

37 Günter Lange,in Franz, Kurt, Günter Lange und Franz-Josef Payrhuber im Auftrag der *Deutschen Akademie für Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* e.V. Volkach. (Meitingen: Corian Verlag, 1995-2000. 1. Ergänzungslieferung, März 1996), 1-28.

"The art of Christine Nöstlinger mainly consists in sharpening the views of thirteen- and fourteen year old for reality. Thus young readers are made aware of the experience of contradiction by means of fantastic ideas," so Lisa Fritsch judges.[38]

In *Konrad* this fantastic idea is the "instant child." A society which no longer is interested in the genuine child and its sometimes sorrowful and difficult education finds its perfect match in the "instant" child. Such a child will be free from flaws, and if not – as it is seen in the "re-educated" Konrad – it can be returned. But generally "instant" children are schooled to perfection, well adapted, with a wide knowledge and command of language, not suited or comparable to other children. Outwardly they look like the true image of healthy children in children's food advertisements: "[A] boy stood in the can, who could be about seven years. He had a healthy sun tanned color, a smooth and soft skin, pink cheeks, pale blue eyes, white milk teeth and fair curls."[39] Whether this image of a truly "Aryan" boy might be a sublime blow of the "left wing" Christine Nöstlinger against her Austrian fellow countrymen and women, I cannot say. But most Austrians certainly look different from this description.

Konrad conveys one of Nöstlinger's rare positive portraits of a female adult. Berti Bartolotti's creative and colorful chaos and her unorthodox lifestyle provide a counterpoint to the average woman described in the children's literature of the 19th century and even widely of the 20th .Berti does not care for the opinion of her fellow creatures. When Konrad asks her, whether it is the normal practice that girls protect boys, she answers that it does not matter who protects whom as long as "the one who needs it will be protected," and when Konrad continues asking if people would not

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38 http://polyglot.lss.wisc.edu/german/austria/noestlinger.htm. 23/04/2002. [translation mine].

39 Christine Nöstlinger, *Konrad oder das Kind aus der Konservenbüchse* (Hamburg: Oetinger, 1975), 18 [translation mine].

laugh about it, she answers: "Only make a mental note of this … You need not care for other people's opinion… If you always think about the doings of others and then do what they do, you will become like the others in the end and then cannot stand yourself any longer."[40]

Berti eats unwholesome food. The book opens with a description of her breakfast: three rolls with butter and honey, a slice of brown bread with ham and cheese, white bread with pâté de foie gras, two soft boiled eggs, four cups of coffee. So she certainly is not on a diet. When she wants to take a bath, she cannot do so: "Unfortunately the goldfish swam in the bath tub. There were seven small ones and four big ones, and Frau Bartolotti had fetched them from the aquarium yesterday and put into the bathtub because she had thought that the fish needed a change in water. Every human being goes on vacation… Only the poor goldfish swim round and round the whole year in their round glass."[41]

Frau Bartolotti uses make-up in abundance: "As youthful as can be done, as beautiful as possible," [42] is her motto. Color plays an important role in her life. She hates gray, but uses it as camouflage color when the instant-child-company reclaims Konrad: "Frau Bartolotti … washed away all color from her face. She put a gray scarf around the yellow hair and she searched … for the gray cardigan which Herr Egon had given her for Christmas as a present. She had never worn the cardigan before since she hated gray."[43] And when she needs courage, she uses color.

Her carpets are famous for their rich colors. The couple who actually ordered Konrad (whose delivery to Berti Bartolotti proved a mistake) appear in gray. The staff

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40 Ibid., 89f. [translation mine].
41 Ibid., 6 [translation mine].
42 Ibid., 8 [translation mine].

of the instant-children-company is dressed in light blue, the color of efficiency and youth, preferred by some airlines.

Her gentleman friend Egon dresses in conventional black and pale gray when he does not work in his pharmacy. He is described as a

> gentleman in the prime of life … 55 years old. And he was a friend of Frau Bartolotti twice a week. Once a week he visited her, and once week she visited him. Then they went to the cinema or theater… Twice a week Herr Egon called Frau Bartolotti 'Bertilein' and Frau Bartolotti called Herrn Egon 'Egilein'. But when they met … on the other days, … she called him 'Herr Magister' [M. Sc.] and he called her 'Gnädige Frau'… The friendship days, by the way, always were Saturday and Tuesday.[44]

He seems to be the conventional counterpoint to Frau Bartolotti and the novel neither tells us why they are friends at all, nor why the friendship takes place only twice a week and then on fixed days. Apparently Berti Bartolotti once had a husband who disappeared one day. She had wished him "at the bottom of the sea and there he seemed to be now, and there he kindly ought to remain."[45] Konrad, however, is equipped with a document by the instant-child-company which speaks of Herr Bartolotti as his father. When Herr Egon wants to substitute the missing "father," Frau Bartolotti is strictly against it, because "First she did not believe that a seven year old boy absolutely needed a father. And secondly … if a father, why then such a boring, dull fellow like Egon? Egon, so she thought, that is the twice-a-week-friend for me – but no father!"[46] She gives in finally, because Konrad seems to be enchanted by the correct Herrn Egon. Both Egon and Konrad personify a world which is controlled by law and order, whereas Berti Bartolotti is the personified other, a person who does not tell her age, does not wear clothes suitable for a woman in the "prime of life": "Frau Bartolotti went to play tennis

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43 Ibid., 119 [translation mine].
44 Ibid., 8 [translation mine].
45 Ibid., 47 [translation mine].
46 Ibid., 47 [translation mine].

in black slacks, wore jeans in the opera, went to the milk-woman dressed in a long silk gown and in the cinema she wore climbing trousers."[47] The only difference is that Konrad was educated that way by the instant-child-company, whereas Herr Egon chose to become so within 55 years of life and Berti chose the opposite. But both the adults agree that a lovable child like Konrad cannot be returned.

This decision will have disastrous effects. As soon as Herr Egon is fully established in the father role, he tries to educate Berti Bartolotti:

> You have to change from top to bottom and have to become more orderly, motherly, more well-behaved. You must become respectable and may not be dressed extraordinarily. From now on you must tidy up, cook regularly, and watch that you only say things, which are good and useful for a seven year old boy [she tends to swearing or singing rude songs sometimes]. You must, you must, you must.[48]

The question arises again why apparently he could spend so many years with a woman he wished to be perfectly different. There is no word about her generosity, when she buys creative and fantastic clothes, toys, a bed for Konrad and spends all her money. Herr Egon cannot see that it is exactly her unorthodox life style which in the literal sense of the word brings color into his otherwise dull and orderly life.

Berti Bartolotti has internalized Egon's ideas about a "good mother" so deeply that, when Konrad is claimed by the factory again, she accepts: "...I do not cook properly and have too much color in the face, and Egon, too, says that I am no good mother."[49] So even a seemingly strong woman can be brought down, when her identity in a hitherto unknown relationship, her motherhood, is questioned. This time it is Konrad who claims her as his own and good mother, and the girl Kitti who supports both.

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47 Ibid., 25 [translation mine].

48 Ibid., 50 [translation mine].

So it is the "women," the adult Frau Bartolotti, and the little Kitti, who hatch a plan how to rescue Konrad. Kitti explains it to Konrad: "...it is quite easy. In education everything functions according to the motto: if a child does the right thing, it will be praised. If a child does something wrong, it will be scolded or not taken notice of."[50] So Konrad finally is saved from the acquired perfection as well as Herr Egon. Egon is "saved" because he does not want to lose Konrad and to a certain degree has achieved a new outlook on Berti ("Shall I perhaps let Berti come [when the instant-children-company's people want to fetch Konrad]? She is, I believe, more courageous than I"[51]), and Konrad changes because he loves Berti, Egon, and Kitti. The method of re-education is quite simple. For every rude word or deed the instant-child utters or does, he will be kissed by Kitti, for everything else he acts accordingly to his drilled instant-child-education he will be pricked with a pin. So an exciting race of education versus education takes place, which Konrad wins, since "he simply loved learning tremendously."[52]

Those parents who originally had ordered him leave highly shocked because of his impudent behavior and decide to rather buy a dog, and the instant-company-director as well is highly shocked and concludes in a final verdict: "This boy cannot have come from my production, that's quite impossible"[53] Konrad's final questions consequently are: "Do I have to be like that [meaning: impudent] from now on all the time?... Do I have to be as I was previously [meaning: over adjusted]?" Both his unusual parents' answer likewise from their different points of view: "God forbid." But it is the girl Kitti

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49 Ibid., 107 [translation mine].
50 Ibid., 126 [translation mine].
51 Ibid., 140 [translation mine].
52 Ibid., 141 [translation mine].
53 Ibid., 147 [translation mine].

who gives the final answer: "Oh, Konrad, we will make a good job of it,"[54] meaning a well balanced education.

So it is no wonder that the main topic of this novel is that of education. By using Konrad's instant-company-education as a foil, Nöstlinger shows the cruelty of an education which is no longer interested in the child itself but drills children into functioning objects. Like instant food the instant child has to be ready for use: no difficulties with the rearing, no illness, no handicaps, a standardized attractiveness which later on might turn out into that of the approved High School cheerleader or the most handsome baseball or golf player. All this is combined with brains. Konrad's fictitious school report excels with the best results in every possible subject. In today's internet pages for example "in virtual marketplaces American ovum agencies praise female donators (age 22, Height 5'2, Degree: Master's) and assure their prospective buyers from Germany…in clumsy German, that every woman is able to present intelligence tests and a medical report."[55] All this sounds like Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, which was written in 1934 and seems to find its final fulfilment today. But even Christine Nöstlinger's vision from 1975, when *Konrad* was written, seems to be no unrealistic estimate.

The instant-child-education Konrad received, is restrictive. "Seven year old boys should only look into mirrors, when cleaning their ears and teeth, otherwise they will become vain and complacent."[56] This rule existed for my own generation equally. Children disturb. So the correct Konrad asks, where he might play: " 'Where will I disturb least?' a question, Berti Bartolotti is unable to answer: 'You don't disturb me at

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54 Ibid., 148 [translation mine].

55 Martin Spiewak, „Schwanger um jeden Preis. (Pregnant at all Costs)" *DIE ZEIT*, Nr. 39, 8. Mai 2002, 35.

all. Really! I don't mind if you play everywhere,' and it is the instant-child who gives the 'reasonable' answer when Berti encourages him to have a look at all his new toys: 'I believe it is better and more sensible for a seven year old boy to play only with one thing for the time being and concentrate on it solely, otherwise one becomes rather nervous!'"[57]

Konrad reveals that kisses are only appropriate for children as a reward, not as an act of spontaneity or emotion: "I stayed at home on my own, I did not break anything nor did I damage anything… I believe then, that you may kiss me."[58]

In Konrad's education guilt played an important role. Before leaving the factory the instant children were schooled in feelings of guilt. Everything forbidden was covered under that term, might it be eating sweets before going to bed nor not answering the absolute truth. This leads to the discovery, that Konrad does not know what he himself feels, since *his* emotions are only supposed to mirror those of others.

Although Konrad is not familiar with human sensations like jealousy or hate, he soon finds out that he is drawn towards the girl Kitti and he reacts positively when he finds out that she loves him and promises to protect him against other boys, although his instant-education sense of propriety tells him, girls ought not protect boys. The gender roles in the instant-production conception of life cannot allow for a powerful female and a male, though little, in need of female protection.

The perfection of Konrad's instant-schooling is contrasted with Kitti's school Konrad is to attend in future. Nöstlinger designs schools populated by incapable teachers, often female, or subjects taught without any talent or enthusiasm. Her teachers

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56 C. Nöstlinger, *Konrad,* 32 [translation mine].
57 Ibid., 35 [translation mine].
58 Ibid., 29 [translation mine].

certainly are lacking ideas, prefer and praise their favorite pupils in front of the whole class, and use methods from the beginning of the last century. They leave children in charge of the class (101); so Konrad as the best pupil has to report about the on-goings during his teacher's absence, which makes him the most hated pupil in his class. Nöstlinger's message is: School is boring. In her novel with the ambiguous title *Stundenplan* (*Timetable*), like *Konrad* written in 1975, school is the topic again. A teacher (female) with the speaking name "Wurm" (worm), produces boring lessons, is

> corpulent, had a fat 55 years behind her. Until three years ago the Wurm was even stouter. During a reduction diet the Wurm had devoured much of the own flesh, but the skin had remained. The skin hung under the double chin, hung above the eyes, over the elbows, around the knees. The quite commonly …carved traffic/intercourse sign [in the school benches] ('Verkehr' in German means 'traffic' and 'sexual intercourse') in connection with the Wurm became obscene, indecent, unpleasant.[59]

Similarly Nöstlinger's novels abhor mothers. Most of them are interfering, narrow minded, unpleasant creatures. In *Stundenplan* the protagonist Annika's mother is said to have a

> hideous back part. You see the bra through the pullover. You can even see that the bra was closed at the last link, and that fat was wobbling above and under the bra. The back part is checkered. A checkered broad arse. Checkered broad arse …flows checkered under the armrest, between the bars of the backrest.[60]

Annika's titles for her mother are "mater dolorosa" (14), "lindworm" (21), "broad arse" (22).

Nöstlinger's mother hatred has something pathological. Even when there are hints that her topics are those of her own family, "therefore the conflict between mothers and daughters often is a topic, since the relationship with her own mother was very tense throughout her complete childhood. Autobiographically conditioned on the other hand

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59 Christine Nöstlinger, *Stundenplan* (Weinheim:Beltz, 14th ed.1991), 5f. [translation mine].

60 Ibid., 22 [translation mine].

is the extraordinarily positive point of view and description of fathers and grandfathers."[61] There are many women with difficult relationships to their mothers. Nevertheless this does not justify the condemnation of a whole station of life.[62] In my opinion Lange's critique is correct that "her portrayal of adults often turned out into a caricature. The presentations of mothers in her books were particularly negative and therefore in no way acceptable."[63]

Berti Bartolotti can be a positive mother figure because she never gave birth to a child. In a way she and Konrad have changed roles. Being drilled by a "perfect" instant-education Konrad knows what is expected by children and how parents ought to behave. Both the adults, Berti Bartolotti and Herr Egon, have to learn how to become parents. This is the positive message of the novel: An education comprising all spheres only can turn out well, when all the persons concerned are willing to learn, when there is no power construct established, and gender becomes unimportant. So far this novel provides new roles and is liberating. But this is not the case with all of Nöstlinger's stories. The critique by N. Packler is justified that she "criticized intensely the traditional role deportment but showed too little alternative role images."[64]

What is interesting are the blanks in Konrad's education. So he does not know about flowers, which perhaps can be seen as a symbol for all that is natural. But he does not know about religion either, particularly about the Christ child and St. Nicolas. So

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61 Günter Lange, 2 [translation mine].

62 I intended to discuss all this with Mrs. Nöstlinger in person. When she never answered my letter, I found out by contacting one of her publishing houses that (1.) she never answers letter, and (2.) she never gives interviews.

63 Günter Lange, 17 [translation mine].

64 N. Packler, „Literatur für Kinder – Literatur zur Kindheit. Eine kritische Würdigung des Werks von Christine Nöstlinger durch einen einheimischen Germanisten" in *1000 & 1 Buch,* 3/1993, 29-31, [translation mine].

Herr Egon informs him about the Christ child and its duties. The result is highly amusing and at the same time shows Nöstlinger's social critique:

> Well, I [Konrad] repeat: The Christ child has wings and comes from heaven and floats down and gives presents to all children. Rich children get much, poor ones get little, and the very poor don't get anything at all. St. Nicolas does not have wings but a golden stick. He comes three weeks earlier and delivers in a similar way. Is that correct?[65]

It is Berti Bartolotti who enlightens Konrad by telling him: " 'Nothing is correct what he [Herr Egon] told you, nothing at all. There is no Christ child and no St. Nicolas, and there is no Easter bunny either.' And when Konrad inquires after the bunny, she summarizes: 'Continually adults want to cheat children. Perpetually they demonstrate them: Look, how mighty, how bright, how intelligent, and how good we are.'"[66]

Religion, no longer plays a role in Nöstlinger's or in most of her contemporaries' novels, and if it does feature, it does so only in a restrictive sense. It is Konrad's instant-education that hinders him to lie, not religious scruples. Nöstlinger's message is that the telling of lies might become a means of survival. Konrad is hated in his new school class because he always tells the absolute truth.

But on the whole religion is no longer a topic as it was in the 19th century. It is no longer forming a bond between people, no longer a subject causing frictions. In the codex of education of the 20th century religion no longer plays an important role. As a value system it has been replaced by secular ethics such as the readiness to help, however, not for the sake of doing a good deed, but for uniting against an unjust system. To get the better of it is part of the game in Nöstlinger's narratives.

So Günter Lange can state three different stages in Nöstlinger's works in general:

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65 Nöstlinger, 59 [translation mine].
66 Ibid., 60 [translation mine].

> At the beginning of the seventies it was her [Nöstlinger's] aim, to help children and adolescents to better face their problems and difficulties. Connected with this was her main goal to lay bare social injustice and to remove inequalities between humans…At the end of the seventies…she lost her political optimism: 'I have to be careful like hell not to become without hope or cynical.'…At the end of the eighties…[h]er demands are very moderate…to give up all education finally.[67]

The Seventies and What Remained

There was a new optimism in the air of the sixties and the beginning of the seventies. Education in general had become a subject. Books like Klaus Mollenhauer's *Erziehung und Emanzipation (Education and Emancipation)* were already programmatic in their chosen title. [68] Hartmut von Hentig founded his "Laborschule" (Laboratory School), a school which encouraged new ways of education, in Bielefeld. The early seventies had witnessed Georg Picht's *Mut zur Utopie(Courage for Utopia)*[69] and his claiming the right of education for men and women even in the smallest village in the Black Forest. During my undergraduate studies at the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg im Breisgau, Picht disciples implored us to go and find the intellectual "resources" in every place and encourage women in particular to undertake university studies. There was hope for a change, for more justice, and welfare for the working population. New books were issued by new publishing houses. Jack Zipes in his essay from 1976 speaks about "Basic books are directly related to the actual class struggles in West Germany. The major figures are from the working classes, and the contents of the

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67 Lange, 15 [translation mine].

68 Klaus Mollenhauer, *Erziehung und Emanzipation. Polemische Skizzen* (München: Juventa, 1970).

stories are…of utmost concern to the underprivileged in society and lead to developing class consciousness."[70]

The seventies were a decade deeply torn between a longing for harmony and the wish to live with values different from the established ones. The German television *WDR Köln* brought an impressive series about a *Journey into the Fifties, Sixties, Seventies.*[71] The German author and journalist Elke Heidenreich and the Austrian journalist Dietmar Schönherr discussed this search for a new identity which the singer Klaus Hofmann circumscribed by "I am the blind/ therefore lead me/ come, we drop all rules." According to both journalists the seventies as well as the sixties were the age of restrictions. Young people as a rule did not possess a room of their own, they still lived together with their parents, who controlled their lives. The pretended intact world was unmasked. New and hitherto unknown disasters took place like the ecological catastrophes of Seveso with its barrels of poison or the average of the ship Amoco Cadiz causing the death of birds and beasts in an oil plague. Germany had its first smog alarm, and the use of cars was forbidden, even though for only a short time. Other topics became equally important, so the question of women, which found its mouthpiece for the first time: the German feminist Alice Schwarzer and other women founded *Emma*, the still one and only feminist magazine in Germany. Girls realized, together with the singer Ina Deters: "I was only a girl/ if only I had died immediately," and Alice Schwarzer commented that "the cry from the throat of the oppressed is

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69 Georg Picht, *Mut zur Utopie. Die großen Zukunftsaufgaben* (München: Piper. 1970).

70 Zipes, 171f.

71 WDR. „Reise in die 50-er, 60-er, 70-er Jahre" Teil 5. *Smogalarm und Discofieber*, 27.08.01, 21.05 Uhr, Redaktion Gudrun Wolter; Teil 6. *Deutscher Herbst und Föhnfrisur*, 03.09.01, 21.05 Uhr [translation mine]. I am indebted to Waltraud Vogt, WDR Köln, who generously lent me the videos.

justified [for our society], only women shall remain well-behaved," and the singer Nina Hagen not only provoked by her way to dress and act, but sang: "I have no desire to fulfill my duty."

There was an important political change. Willi Brandt, the social democrat, worked for "change through rapprochement." The photos of his prostration in the ghetto of Warsaw went around the world and young people commented: "At least someone has recollected guilt."

I remember strongly the motion of no confidence in 1972 which would have led to the voting out of Brandt as a chancellor. With my then matriculated pupils I sat in front of the television, fevering about the result. I never felt more in solidarity with people older and younger than myself as in those times, and the refusal of the motion strengthened my belief in justice.

But all this lasted for a very short time only. In 1974 the Middle East crisis endangered jobs and presented us Germans car-free streets. As Elke Heidenreich put it: "No longer were life dreams fulfilled." People retreated into private happiness or sects. The struggle for more justice and a better distribution of the goods of this world which Ulrike Meinhoff, Andreas Baader, and Gudrun Ensslin intended, ended in an "orgy of violence" (Heidenreich). Meinhoff, Baader, and Ensslin became the most wanted persons in the whole country. There was police presence everywhere, and I recollect driving on the autobahn, when suddenly I found myself escorted by the police. The reason: my then shoulder long brown hair made me resemble Ulrike Meinhoff.

Altogether, the seventies were what Elke Heidenreich called "a dismal century." It was shaped by insecurity, violence, and the trial to find individual ways out of the

misery, but without the conviction that it could be done. In that respect Christine Nöstlinger's scruples and end-of-world-thoughts were justified.

Although I do not share Nöstlinger's pessimism of the late eighties that education ought to be given up altogether, I believe that the great ideas of the seventies came to a standstill and meet with very little interest nowadays. The world has changed. Wars and unemployment are the topics of today.

Picht's calls for women's education or a broader education in general have been fulfilled. More than fifty percent of all university students in Germany are women. In university towns such like Heidelberg more than sixty percent of all the children in Primary Schools are going on to High Schools. But studies like the *PISA study*[72] speak a different language. Our pupils do not seem to learn the right things. The question is, what are the "right subjects?" Knowledge itself cannot only consist of those topics which are interesting for the industry. Nobody in Germany can deny that there is a deep crisis on the educational field. Unheard of events like the killing of numerous persons: pupils, teachers, policemen, in Erfurt, May 2002, and other towns speak their own language. The atmosphere of helplessness creates a desire to find a culprit, a scapegoat. For some people it is the teacher who is to blame or parents who do not act like parents. Most Primary School teachers are female. A father's absence from the educational process is tolerated, since "he" has to earn money. A mother who does the same, is still suspected of self-realization and looked at as askance in Germany. There are still too few day care and youth centers, too few day schools (in this country schools start about 8 a.m. and end about 1 p.m., apart from the final classes at High School). So it is an enervating business for mothers to reconcile the demands of a job with the upbringing

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72 *PISA*: Program for International Student Assessment.

of children, and if there are failures, they can be sure to be blamed. Although in bigger towns single households make up more than fifty percent, we still pretend that there is the functioning family which has to be the model, 'functioning' meaning a mother who stays at home. But this is not the reality.

Young people on the other hand have difficulties in finding a job. There are counties like Mecklenburg-Vorpommern which have 25 % unemployed youth, quite a number of them are drop-outs from school. The mixture of frustration, hatred of foreigners, of asylum seekers, who apparently get the better of the German social system and more possibilities than the natives, is highly explosive and dangerous. Offsprings of the former *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers) of the sixties are still not integrated anywhere. Descendants from Germans in the former Soviet Union, now living in Germany, still do not speak German and remain among themselves, yearning for Karanganda or places in Siberia where they came from. The *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* justly titles the same topic under "Here a social explosive is 'growing'."[73]

So there is an enormous demand for education and integration. If the government of whatever party is not able to solve these problems, the future will be become even more difficult than it is now. Then Erfurt could become a synonym for a beginning of the end.

But this is only one side of the coin. For the first time there is a generation in their twenties which earns an enormous lot of money. Some of them are rich, because they belong to the first generation after World War II who inherited money. This generation is called the "fun generation," because their main aim in life seems to have fun. So their

status magazine justly has the name *Fit For Fun*. Its message is that those who keep their bodies fit by working on them in the various fitness centers, who eat the right food (motto: because I am worth it) can expect fun from life. Fitness has replaced religion. Strong rules tell us if we do not shape our bodies to perfection or eat the wrong food. There are television cooking shows for *Fit For Fun* so that no one has an excuse for eating the wrong food. Florian Illies calls this generation the "Generation Golf," "golf," because of the VW cabrio "golf" which the members of this class prefer. Speaking about the magazine *Fit For Fun*, Illies states:

> If there is a magazine which is only for this narcissistic generation … then it is *Fit For Fun*. The magazine as highly polished as the biceps of its readers was created in the middle of the nineties, to be exact, in 1996, when the generation golf left school and…pronounced the fitness- and sun studios to be their preferred stay. The colorful magazine does nothing else on many hundred of pages than telling the reader, that he[sic] justly tortures himself. Because, so every essay, every photo, every advertisement says, only he [sic] has fun who is fit.[74]

Nevertheless, they do not seem to be immune to sickness. So the *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* writes under the title: "*Die 'Spaßgesellschaft' macht immer öfter krank*" ("The 'fun society' takes more and more sick days")[75] and in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Lars Jensen reports: "Des Lebens müde. 'Quarterlife crisis' – Die Generation der Überzwanzigjährigen ist ein bisschen zu früh von sich selbst erschöpft" ("Tired from Life. 'Quarterlife Crisis' – The generation of those in their twenties is a bit too early exhausted from itself").[76] Jensen's study speaks about a twenty-two year old woman from Berlin, "who complains that she cannot manage the fact all right of getting older" and he comments: "In a time in which everybody wants to squeeze the maximum out of

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[73] *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, „Da ‚wächst' sozialer Sprengstoff" Nr. 128, 06.06.02, 11 [translation mine].

[74] Florian Illies, *Generation Golf. Eine Inspektion* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2002), 92 [translation mine].

[75] *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* Nr. 127. 05.06.02, 13.

his [sic] life, the claims go up. This *must* have a bitter end." An explanation for this highly depressive behavior for Jensen is the fact that this generation "is the first age group which does not share memories and values. All human beings who were born before 1970 had experienced political or social events which have coined them as a generation: an economic crisis, war, [Germany's] recovery, the students' revolt...As it was never necessary to be in solidarity with others in order to reach a common goal, the more than twenty somethings have been in solidarity with themselves [only]. The greatest solidarity between the children of this epoch is their huge urge for solitary ways."

A society which claims fun as its most important value in life cannot cope with disappointments and handicaps. Human beings are dependent on one another. We live on each other's warmth and friendliness and are lost to the same degree as we forget about these facts. Human beings cannot face loss and death alone by being *fit*. There has to be nourishment for the soul.

But there seems to be a slight change, where adolescents of today are concerned. The *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung* reports about a study, initiated by the University of Siegen:

> For forty years the influence of a personal model on adolescents was retrogressive – now those influences have nearly tripled by 56 percents in five years...With girls their own mothers stand up at the front as models, besides female singers from hit parades... With boys neither pop stars nor mothers served as models but manifold successful athletes – fathers follow at a distinct distance. Altogether the ten to eighteen year olds according to the research results are not ideological but pragmatic. Most of them have no longer anything in common with the former generations of protest. [77]

This can denote good news and bad news, bad news insofar as an unpolitical youth that claims for "private happiness, consumerism and career" [so the heading], is

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[76] Lars Jensen, in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 124. 01./02.02. SZ Wochenende V) [translation mine].

more susceptible to seduction and irritation in times of less economic profits. The good news may be that the *mother/athlete*-model could combine soul and body, nourishment and fun. But then it should not be gender oriented (the female for the soul, the male for the body) and so perhaps further new dichotomies.

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[77] *Rhein-Neckar-Zeitung*, „Privates Glück, Konsum und Karriere sind gefragt" Nr. 129, 07.06.02, 15 [translation mine].

VI

MYSTICISM AND RECONCILIATION

mysticism, n : **2a**: a theory of mystical knowledge: the doctrine or belief that direct knowledge of God, of spiritual truth, of ultimate reality, or comparable matters is attainable through immediate intuition, insight, or illumination and in a way differing from ordinary sense perception or ratiocination

reconcile, vb: **1a** (1): to restore to friendship, compatibility, or harmony, **b**: ADJUST, SETTLE

Writing for me is like weaving a carpet (may be, that this is one of the reasons why I am so fond of the unruly carpet-weaver Berti Bartolotti in Nöstlinger's *Konrad*). The topics of the different chapters are the threads, arranged in different colors and different patterns. The chosen narratives, their analysis, my own stories (*The Damsel in Distress*, *Anna*), my autobiography, all add up to a huge carpet. Even my paintings are a "sort of writing" – writing in a different media. Only their structure is different from language. People in Medieval times who had not learned literacy could well "read" the frescoes in their chapels. They were familiar with biblical stories which always started with Adam and Eve and ended up with Christ's resurrection as an act of *reconciliation* between God and God's creation.

My last chapter begins with a "prologue" in the first case. It is the story of *Anna*, who not only learns to read but, what is more, to ask the right questions, to *speak* up. Anna's story is linked with the Grimm's fairy tale of the *Maiden Without Hands* which explains my personal biography. This fairy tale marks "the breaking in of divine strengths," Dorothee Sölle speaks about,[1] a feature, not uncommon in fairy tales but strongly objected to in the reality of our days. Sölle's chapter "Childhood

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[1] Dorothee Sölle, *Und ist noch nicht erschienen*, 118.

Mysticism" opposes this antipathy and shows the dangers when we neglect the forces of mysticism.

In the second case this last chapter consists of a final "conclusion," which once more brings together the different strands of this thesis: firstly, *storytelling* as an act of overcoming *boundaries*, secondly *storytelling* as the *healing* of wounds and the establishing of *democracy* and civilization, and thirdly *storytelling* as an act of *reconciliation*, thus embracing our own *roots*.

Anna Learns to Read

Today it is the first day of school – at last! The children form a circle in the twilight of the fall afternoon and all of them sing: "Lofty night of the clear stars."[2] Torches are burning. Anna presses her school bag[3] close to her. Although her bag is smaller than those of the others, it is blue, and blue is Anna's favorite color. Will she be allowed to join in the song? She knows that her mother does not like it. Why is that so? It is about stars and she never forbade her to sing "Do you know, how many little stars are in the blue vault of heaven?" But had not her distant father written into Anna's little book of poetry: "Above all, my child, be faithful and truthful. Never let a lie desecrate your mouth"? No, Anna did not want to tell a lie and so she decides to hum the melody but not to sing the song. Meanwhile lessons start. Anna is in Frau Benedikt's class, together with forty boys and girls. Frau Benedikt is a supply teacher. Anna can understand this very well as Frau Benedikt has a huge supply of support and cheerfulness. Sometimes she escorts Anna home, if Anna cannot help but scream when the sirens wail. Frau Benedikt has conquered Anna's heart by an apple tree. The

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2 A Nazi song.

tree is painted on the board. It stands for an "A." Anna loves apples. Their names alone sound so special: autumn reinette, beautiful of boskoop, cox orange, yellow bellefleur, morning fragrance. All of them grow in the huge garden of her grandfather, and sometimes, when Anna had particularly red cheeks, grandfather had called her "little borsdorfer," because the borsdorfer is a particularly red apple. That had been in those times when her grandfather had been happy. But now, as uncle Hans, grandfather's favorite son, was dead, grandfather only had a petrified face. "Fallen in the field,"[4] they had told her. But could one die of falling? And should not it be "Fallen on the field?" Anna is perplexed. Now it is as if someone had switched off the sun. One had to be silent; even her mother was not longer allowed to play her pearly chords on the piano. No, the piano was draped by a heavy, black cloth, and no one was allowed to sing any more.

The noise, deep, humming, getting louder and louder, within the next minutes the head will explode, now, now, the abyss opens, scream, scream, scream, until nothing remains of you, everything burst, exploded, shredded, slivered, splintered – extinguished.

Half a year later, Fräulein Heydenreich took over the class. Frau Benedikt had to go. It is peace now and in times of peace supply teachers are not needed any longer. Fräulein Heydenreich is always dressed in deepest black. She loses no time and abundantly deals out slaps. At present they read *Little Hans in the Stork's Nest*, and woe to those children who do not put their fingers under that word which is just read!

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3 In Germany children get school bags, filled with sweets for their enrollment.

4 'Gefallen' in German means 'killed in action' or 'fallen'.

Why do grandfather and mother call Fräulein Heydenreich a "narcissus?"[5] Anna does not understand what the dour, sombre teacher and the wonderful delicate flowers have in common, which gently rock in the garden in the wind.

They have learned a new poem, a spring poem, so Fräulein Heydenreich says. The sparrows described in it give notice to a penny-pinching farmer and leave his house. Anna liked that. On her way home she is on her own. Nobody from Anna's class lives along her path of hedges. She notices the big icicles at Petermann's house, and the piles of snow along the main street. She hears the birds which quarrel about bread crumbs, she feels the long missed warm rays of sun on her skin, and suddenly she knows: This is exactly as it is described in the newly learned poem:

> Sun shines, from all the roofs
> Snow is dropping lustily;
> Outside on the fence
> We rub our beaks

Enchanted Anna stops. How is it possible that someone can write a poem and be dead like this Herr von Eichendorff, the poem's author? How can he describe what Anna experiences just now? How is that possible?

Immaculate blue sky, spanned from East to West in one pure bow, the snow-covered plateau sunlit by a serene winter sun. Little fir trees, changed into clumsy little ice bears, finches, on the higher branches bullfinches with their beautiful majestic coloring of black and red. Suddenly a muffled booming, nearer and nearer. Her mother abruptly turning pale. Hands which drag one between the little trees, press one to the ground, keep one's mouth shut. Aeroplanes, elegantly glistening in

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[5] The German word "Narzisse" (narcissus) is similar to "Nazisse," a colloquial term for followers of the Nazi regime.

silver, deeper and deeper their flight, inside young and laughing faces, knights from a different star.

Sometimes, if Anna promises to behave extremely well, she is allowed to visit Frau Paulsen who lives on the first floor. It is true that Anna is a bit afraid of Frau Paulsen, because she rolls majestically along like a queen and can become rather grim if she is of the opinion that Anna was too noisy on the black and white staircase outside the apartments or did not keep the hours of rest at noon. But Frau Paulsen possesses a treasure: many, many books of fairy tales with colored pictures which Anna cannot have enough of. Today Anna sits in Frau Paulsen's kitchen. She has taken a fancy to this enormous room. It is kept in black and white, the floor has a pattern of black and white tiles and is bordered with "exclamation marks." So at least it looks like to Anna. She is given the purple leather cushion and an enormous book. At this time she can decipher the title herself: *The Story of Caliph Stork.*[6] The world rotates around Anna. She, who is familiar with the neighboring villages at most, strolls about the market of Baghdad, catches glimpses of fruits, the form, color and smell of which she never perceived before. She passes houses with rich, strange ornaments, not equalled by anything in the austere half-timbered buildings of her little town. She sinks into an unknown world and reads and reads.

Moonlit path through the forest...deep, black... silent, up hill and down dale...three castles at the end...the one in the middle sneers emptily...the right one in deep shadow, so it will have to be the left one...behind heavy gates, metal-mounted, serpents...serpents, wriggling in clusters...in the middle, highly majestic, Medusa's head...a ghastly smile...contemptuous, arms entwine the hands, the body...gently the

throat, very softly the throat...the scream suffocates, implodes, even before it comes into existence.

Today it is the first day after the Easter holidays, which are rather late this year. Fräulein Heydenreich expects that the children report about their holiday events. "Preparing an essay," she calls it. But Anna has the feeling that Fräulein Heydenreich far more wants to pump the children for information. Usually Anna does not like to narrate, but today it is different. Filled with enthusiasm she reports about the lovely Easter excursion to the cuckoo meadow. Grandfather had taken the lead, and then here and there something was shining in the fresh leaf green of the hedges or in the young grass. Easter eggs which Anna, giving sharp little cries of excitement had collected. On their way they had passed a sort of garden. Anna had been amazed to find a garden among meadows and so far away from anywhere. It had been surrounded by a high and thick blackthorn hedge, about as round as a circle and without any entrance. The first violets and Anna's so beloved pale-yellow primroses already grew at the bottom of the hedge. When Anna mentions the mysterious garden, Fräulein Heydenreich interrupts her brusquely: "It's the old Jewish cemetery. So it has grown wild, hasn't it?" She sneers. Anna cannot continue reporting about the first larks which carolled high in the air, about the hundreds and hundreds of primroses on the cuckoo meadow. Who were "Jews?" Why had not they been buried on the cemetery behind the red brick church in the middle of the little town? And why did Fräulein Heydenreich speak so sneeringly? If Anna only could ask mother! But mother did not feel well. She still had not got any news from Anna's absent father.

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[6] Wilhelm Hauff, *Die Karawane: Die Geschichte von Kalif Storch* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1987), 27f.

From day to day she looked paler and more exhausted. "Hush, be quiet, control yourself," Anna was often told these days, "your mother has taken a nap!" Anna's nights became leaden.

The water hole: black, sucking, bubbling, ...otherwise – silence. No bird comes here, no little animal scampers around. Sluggish and brooding the air. There, mud flies from the hole. Frog hands grab into the emptiness. The water sprite, the water sprite! Now he grasps well-calculatedly, pulls and pulls. No scream will loosen, rattling, choking, the end.

Anna is on her way back home. An old stooped man addresses her and points to the house of Anna's family. "Do you know who now owns that house?" As a matter of fact Anna is strictly forbidden to speak to strangers. And particularly strictly forbidden is to ask the many foreign soldiers, who now buzz around the little town: "Have you chocolate [sic!]?" This means begging, Anna's mother had explained. But to tell the old man that the house belonged to grandfather and father will probably be allowed to her. "I laid the tiles in this house," so the old man tells her. Anna is delighted. Finally she knows who laid the beautiful border of "exclamation marks." "Formerly the house belonged to Jewish merchants, but they were forced to leave for South America," continues the old man. And then he goes away. Anna remains bewildered. Again "Jews," and why did they have to leave? This time Anna decides to act. She returns and chases back into the town center. In front of Frau Westermann's book store she stops breathlessly. Astonished Frau Westermann looks at the little, flushed girl in her blue dress with the thick brown plait, who now seriously stands before her counter. "Do you have a book about Jews?" Anna asks. Anna has learned to read.

In many aspects Anna's story is my own story, her nightmares are mine. Like Anna I was and am on a search for truth. Like her I wanted to know about the history of my people some fifty years ago. Being the daughter of a Nazi judge I always felt guilty towards Jews. I learned about them at an exchange visit to the Netherlands, when I was thirteen years old. Until then the term "Jew" had never been used in my family. There was a silent agreement that we never discussed the war and anything related to it at home. When I found out about what the German Nazis had done to their own people, the German Jews, and other Jews and people whom they had termed to be "non-Aryan," it left me horrified, but there was nobody with whom I could speak about it.

It widened the already existing gap in the relationship with my father. He had returned disillusioned and broken from a POW's camp near Dallas after the surrender, which he had only been able to survive by the help of people of color. So I was brought up with a deep respect for African Americans in particular. When in 1998 my mother died, I was given all the personal papers of my father's denazification. During the years of adolescence and as an adult I had taken the easy way and despised my father for being a Nazi. In these papers I found a different story: It had been officially acknowledged that my father had risked his own life, because he wanted to have a fair trial for members of the Socialist Party. He was beaten by his own party to give him an effective warning. So he lived with a broken nose all his life. The other thing I found out was that he had refused to take over a court martial. As a punishment he had been sent to the war on its very first day. So I grew up with a father nearly always absent and later on missing in action.

Had I been too rash in judging my father? But there was the poem still:

Above all my child, be faithful and truthful,
Never let a lie desecrate your mouth,

which my father had written to me. However, it has a continuation:

From time immemorial it was the highest fame of the German people
To be faithful and truthful.

My father wrote it into my little book of poetry in 1949, after his return from the war. Did he think that this poem appeals to a heroic quality inherent in German nature? Is it then a Nazi poem? Did my father's justice only concern non-Jews? I will never find out about that. My father has been dead for twenty years.

Do his lines express wishful thinking, written by someone who was deeply shaken in his beliefs and now hoped that his little daughter might succeed where he failed? Is this text in its essence then a "text of terror" in disguise?

"To tell and hear tales of terror is to wrestle demons in the night, without a compassionate God to save us … The fight itself is solitary and intense," so Phyllis Trible writes.[7] Do Anna's and my nightmares about choking and suppressed screams find their final explanation in this poem, handed over by an untruthful father to a daughter he thus swears to truthfulness? Was I another *Maiden Without Hands*?[8]

The Maiden Without Hands

A miller had been falling little by little into poverty, and soon he had nothing left but his mill and a large apple tree behind it. One day, as he was on his way to chop wood in the forest, he met an old man whom he had never seen before.

"There's no reason you have to torture yourself by cutting wood," the old man said. "I'll make you rich if you promise to give me what's behind your mill."

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[7] Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 4.

[8] *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm*, trans. by Jack Zipes (The Maiden Without Hands) vol. I (New York: Bantam Books, 1988), 128-133.

What else can that be but my apple tree, thought the miller, and he gave the stranger his promise in writing.

"In three years I'll come and fetch what's mine," the stranger said with a snide laugh, and he went away.

When the miller returned home, his wife went out to meet him and said, "Tell me, miller how did all this wealth suddenly get into our house? All at once I've discovered our chests and boxes are full. Nobody's brought anything, and I don't know how it's all happened."

"It's from a stranger I met in the forest," he said. "He promised me great wealth if I agreed in writing to give him what's behind our mill. We can certainly spare the large apple tree."

"Oh; husband!" his wife exclaimed in dread. "That was the devil! He didn't mean the apple tree but our daughter, who was behind the mill sweeping out the yard."

The miller's daughter was a beautiful and pious maiden who went through the next three years in fear of God and without sin. When the time was up and the day came for the devil to fetch her, she washed herself clean and drew a circle around her with chalk. The devil appeared quite early, but he could not get near her, and he said angrily to the miller, "I want you to take all the water away from her so she can't wash herself anymore. Otherwise, I have no power over her."

Since the miller was afraid of the devil, he did as he was told. The next morning the devil came again, but she wept on her hands and made them completely clean. Once more he could not get near her and said furiously to the miller, "Chop off her hands. Otherwise, I can't touch her."

The miller was horrified and replied, "How can I chop off the hands of my own child!"
But the devil threatened him and said, "If you don't do it, you're mine, and I'll come and get you myself!"

The father was so scared of him that he promised to obey. He went to his daughter and said, "My child, if I don't chop off both your hands, the devil will take me away, and in my fear I promised I'd do it. Please help me out of my dilemma and forgive me for the injury I'm causing you."

"Dear Father," she answered, "do what you want with me. I'm your child." Then she extended both her hands and let him chop them off. The devil came a third time, but she had wept so long and so much on the stumps that they too were all clean. Then he had to abandon his game and lost all claim to her.

Now the miller said to his daughter, "I've become so wealthy because of you that I shall see to it you'll live in splendor for the rest of your life."

But she answered, "No, I cannot stay here. I'm going away and shall depend on the kindness of people to provide me with whatever I need."

Then she had her maimed arms bound to her back, and at dawn she set out on her way and walked the entire day until it became dark. She was right outside a royal garden, and by the glimmer of the moon she could see trees full of beautiful fruit. She could not enter the garden, though because it was surrounded by water. Since she had traveled the entire day without eating, she was very hungry. Oh, if only I could get in! she thought. I must eat some of the fruit or else I'll perish! Then she fell to her knees, called out to the Lord, and prayed. Suddenly an angel appeared who closed one of the



locks in the stream so that the moat became dry and she could walk through it. Now she went into the garden accompanied by the angel. She caught sight of a beautiful tree full of pears, but the pears had all been counted. Nonetheless, she approached the tree and ate one of the pears with her mouth to satisfy her hunger, but only this one. The gardener was watching her, but since the angel was standing there, he was afraid, especially since he thought the maiden was a spirit. He kept still and did not dare to cry out or speak to her. After she had eaten the pear, and her hunger was stilled, she went and hid in the bushes.

The next morning the king who owned the garden came and counted the pears. When he saw one was missing, he asked the gardener what had happened to it, for the pear was not lying under the tree and had somehow vanished.

"Last night a spirit appeared," answered the gardener. "It had no hands and ate one of the pears with its mouth."

"How did the spirit get over the water?" asked the king. "And where did it go after it ate the pear?"

"Someone wearing a garment as white as snow came down from heaven, closed the lock, and dammed up the water so the spirit could walk through the moat. And, since it must have been an angel, I was afraid to ask any questions or to cry out. After the spirit had eaten the pear, it just went away."

"If it's as you say," said the king, "I shall spend the night with you and keep watch."

When it became dark, the king went into the garden and brought a priest with him to talk to the spirit. All three sat down beneath the tree and kept watch. At midnight the maiden came out of the bushes, walked over to the tree, and once again ate one of the pears with her mouth, while the angel in white stood next to her. The priest stepped forward and said to the maiden, "Have you come from heaven or from earth? Are you a spirit or a human being?"

"I'm not a spirit, but a poor creature forsaken by everyone except God."

"You may be forsaken by the whole world, but I shall not forsake you," said the king.

He took her with him to his royal palace, and since she was so beautiful and good, he loved her with all his heart, had silver hands made for her, and took her for his wife.

After a year had passed, the king had to go to war, and he placed the young queen under the dare of his mother and said, "If she has a child, I want you to protect her and take good care of her, and write me right away."

Soon after, the young queen gave birth to a fine-looking boy. The king's mother wrote to him immediately to announce the joyful news. However, on the way the messenger stopped to rest near a brook, and since he was exhausted from the long journey, he fell asleep. Then the devil appeared. He was still trying to harm the pious queen, and so he exchanged the letter for another one that said that the queen had given birth to a changeling. When the king read the letter, he was horrified and quite distressed, but he wrote his mother that she should protect the queen and take care of her until his return. The messenger started back with the letter, but he stopped to rest at the same spot and fell asleep. Once again the devil came and put a different letter in his pocket that said that they should kill the queen and her child. The old mother was tremendously disturbed when she received the letter and could not believe it. She

wrote the king again but received the same answer because the devil kept replacing the messenger's letters with false letters each time. The last letter ordered the king's mother to keep the tongue and eyes of the queen as proof that she had done his bidding.

But the old woman wept at the thought of shedding such innocent blood. During the night she had a doe fetched and cut out its tongue and eyes and put them away. Then she said to the queen, "I can't let you be killed as the king commands. However, you can't stay here any longer. Go out into the wide world with your child and never come back."

She tied the child to the queen's back, and the poor woman went off with tears in her eyes. When she came to a great wild forest, she fell down on her knees and prayed to God. The Lord's angel appeared before her and led her to a small cottage with a little sign saying "Free Lodging for Everyone." A maiden wearing a snow white garment came out of the cottage and said, "Welcome, Your Highness," and took her inside. She untied the little boy from her back and offered him her breast so he could have something to drink. Then she laid him down in a beautifully made bed.

"How did you know that I'm a queen?" asked the poor woman.

"I'm an angel sent by God to take care of you and your child," replied the maiden in white. So the queen stayed seven years in the cottage and was well cared for. By the grace of God and through her own piety her hands that had been chopped off grew back again.

When the king finally returned from the wars, the first thing he wanted to do was to see his wife and child. However, his old mother began to weep and said, "You wicked man, why did you write and order me to kill two innocent souls?" She showed him the two letters that the devil had forged and resumed talking. "I did as you ordered," and displayed the tongue and eyes.

At the sight of them the king burst into tears and wept bitterly over his poor wife and little son. His old mother was aroused and took pity on him.

"Console yourself," she said. "She's still alive. I secretly had a doe killed and kept its tongue and eyes as proof. Then I took the child and tied him to your wife's back and ordered her to go out into the wide world, and she had to promise me never to return here because you were so angry with her."

"I shall go as far as the sky is blue, without eating or drinking, until I find my dear wife and child," the king said. "That is, unless they have been killed or have died of hunger in the meantime."

The king wandered for about seven years and searched every rocky cliff and cave he came across. When he did not find her, he thought she had perished. During this time he neither ate nor drank, but God kept him alive. Eventually, he came to a great forest, where he discovered the little cottage with the sign "Free Lodging for Everyone." Then the maiden in white came out, took him by the hand, and led him inside.

"Welcome, Your Majesty," she said, and asked him where he came from.

"I've been wandering about for almost seven years looking for my wife and child, but I can't find them."

The angel offered him food and drink, but he refused and said he only wanted to rest awhile. So he lay down to sleep and covered his face with a handkerchief. Then the angel went into the room where the queen was sitting with her son, whom she was

accustomed to calling Sorrowful, and said, "Go into the next room with your child. Your husband has come."

So the queen went to the room where he was lying, and the handkerchief fell from his face.

"Sorrowful," she said, "pick up your father's handkerchief and put it over his face again."

The child picked the handkerchief up and put it over his face. The king heard all this in his sleep and took pleasure in making the handkerchief drop on the floor again. The boy became impatient and said, "Dear Mother, how can I cover my father's face when I have no father on earth. I've learned to pray to 'our Father that art in heaven,' and you told me that my father was in heaven and that he was our good Lord. How am I supposed to recognize this wild man? He's not my father."

When the king heard this, he sat up and asked her who she was.
"I'm your wife," she replied, "and this is your son, Sorrowful."

When the king saw that she had real hands, he said, "My wife had silver hands."

"Our merciful Lord let my natural hands grow again," she answered.
The angel went back to the sitting room, fetched the silver hands, and showed them to him. Now he knew for certain that it was his dear wife and dear son, and he kissed them and was happy.

"A heavy load has been taken off my mind," he said.

After the Lord's angel ate one more meal with them, they went home to be with the king's old mother. There was rejoicing everywhere, and the king and queen had a second wedding and lived happily ever after.

Shortly before my first academic year in the USA ended, the school's program assistant gave me a book, because she knew I loved fairy tales and came from a country of fairy tales. I had no idea what it was about and certainly no idea how very important this book should become to me. It was Gertrud Mueller Nelson's book *Here All Dwell Free: Stories to Heal the Wounded Feminine.*[9] At that time, my days were crammed full with academic work and I very much doubted that I would be able to read its 356 pages before returning to Germany. But I was curious and started reading the Grimm's fairy tale of *The Handless Maiden*. I sat glued to it for three days and nights and then knew that this story was my story. I found myself in the obedient daughter, with a father who had made a pact with the devil – like my father with the

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[9] Gertrud Mueller Nelson, *Here All Dwell Free* (New York: Paulist Press, 1999).

Nazis. It dawned upon me that I had been deeply wounded by a father who sometimes did not speak to his family for days, who never expressed positive emotions, of whom I was terrified because of his fits of a cold, sarcastic, and at times even sadistic behavior. All I had learned was to be always on the alert, to make myself invisible. I had spent a vast amount of time in my youth hiding in attics, reading or sitting on our enormous yew trees, where nobody could observe me. But nevertheless I still pitied my father and saw him as a broken man, a victim.

After 11 September 2001, all my old war memories were stirred, when I looked at the collapsing twin towers of the World Trade Center. I suddenly saw the burning houses of my native town of Hannover, which had been destroyed to four-fifths. I heard the wails of the sirens which I cannot bear to this day. I smelled the ashes, I listened to the screams of people who panicked. Again, I had become the little girl who sat in the basement, scolded because she could not control her screaming and did not "keep countenance." So, here was the origin of my suffocated nightly screams.

After 11 September, I could not write a single sentence. Similar to the female protagonist in Christa Wolf's novel *Leibhaftig* (*Incarnate*)[10] who experiences the collapse of the former GDR on her own body, I myself was in a sort of shock. I suffered from writing block, and it dawned upon me that I needed professional help. So I looked for it. My topic: the "distant" father and what he stood for, war. What had happened to the *Handless Maiden* was happening to me. As she had to loose her substitute hands of silver, the hands of convention, so I had to give up the role of a daughter who always wanted to see the best in everybody and his or her actions, above all in her own father. I had to acknowledge that evil exists, that it cannot be

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[10] Christa Wolf, *Leibhaftig* (München: Luchterhand 2002).

hushed up or appeased. Nazi ideas are evil, wherever they were, are, and will be taught. Gertrud Mueller Nelson calls this act of acknowledgment a "transformation through disenchantment," and continues: "Disenchantment breaks an old spell or possession."[11] I was claimed by a bond of faithfulness to a father, who although a judge himself, did not do justice to truthfulness. I became free from it by writing about it, by making the story public, something I had never intended to do. This does not mean that I cannot mourn a relationship which could have based on equality, truth and love.

"Our merciful Lord let my natural hands grow again," so the Handless Maiden speaks. The fairy tale leaves no doubt about the origin of the transformation: it is "God's grace." To cover thousands of miles in order to come across the message of the *Maiden Without Hands* – is this to be called sheer coincidence or God's guidance and grace? Or is it what Dorothee Sölle describes as "the breaking in of divine strengths into human reality?"[12]

Dorothee Sölle *Mystik und Widerstand (The Silent Cry. Mysticism and Resistance)*

In my introductory chapter I cited Dorothee Sölle's underlining of the "academization of theology," thus stripping theology of its "substantiality." For Sölle "[i]n the crisis of science…the question for myth is put anew, is myth – the history of the breaking in of divine strengths into human reality – necessary in order to express the future or even a hope for the world?"[13] In our world of rationalization we try to

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11 Mueller Nelson, 165.
12 Sölle, *Und ist noch nicht erschienen*, 118.
13 Sölle, 118.

keep low those forces which hinder us to control ourselves and others. Ungovernable "divine strengths" certainly belong into this category. They could inflame unruly ideas about a different and more just world, where the poor are provided, wars stigmatized, the needy ones, children in particular, are cared for. They could activate resistance against an ossified reality which by no means is interested in a change of the status quo. Mysticism seems to be out of date, with regard to its contents. It is therefore astonishing to find a book with the title *Mystik und Widerstand (Mysticism and Resistance)*. In this book Dorothee Sölle speaks about "mysticism of childhood," a phrase which will help to retrace the various steps in all the different childhood or adolescents' stories I went through. The notion of mysticism in this last chapter connects us with what is essential in life – at least to my belief. Sölle describes cultures like that of the American Indians, in which the "cry for a vision" forms the center, or which "has a high regard for dreams that grows with an educational process for taking dreams seriously."[14]

Our Western tradition, which after the Age of Enlightenment relies predominantly on reason, and has forgotten these old values, minimized or ridiculed them as childish:

> [D]reams are the concern of one's psychotherapist and the ideas of a different life belong to the private sphere ...the inner light is rationalized away. It is so easy to douse *the inner light* of a human being. And we busily assist in doing just that as we learn to make the world's efficiency our own. We cut ourselves off from our own experiences by looking upon them as irrelevant and not worth talking about or, what is not less cynical, not communicable at all. We are losing our dreams, those of the night and those of the day, and increasingly we lose the visions of our life.[15]

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[14] Dorothee Sölle, *Mystik und Widerstand. »Du stilles Geschrei»* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1998), 27. *The Silent Cry: Mysticism and Resistance*, trans. by Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 10f.

Stimulated by Sölle, I tried to trace my own experiences with a *reality beyond* the generally approved one. I had found my personal roots already in my first year in America. I come from Lower Saxony, from the Weserbergland, an area in Germany where Grimm's *Fairy Tales* were collected, and so it was quite natural that I was brought up with them as so many other of my compatriots. But like them, I soon learned that these tales were for children only. On our campus in Cambridge I made the acquaintance of a little boy, aged five. When I asked for his name, he told me to follow him. He knelt in front of a snow heap and whispered his name into it. When at first I did not understand, he repeated the whole ritual, this time telling me "that the name has to be kept secret." I was delighted by this little boy's wisdom, although he probably was not brought up with the story of Rumpelstiltskin who "ripped himself in two" when his name became known. Many cultures have the tradition that your real name must only be known to intimate friends.[16] This little boy had that age-old wisdom.

In fairy tales, speaking to animals or flowers is quite normal. They are messengers of a wisdom and a truth we have long lost and forgotten. But sometimes they reach us, and for the twinkling of an eye they show us the "other" reality, which is hidden behind ours, drifting apart like Avalon and the "real world." It happened to me on a tour through Greece in 1999 in Olympia. It was noon and although only May, rather hot. Nevertheless, I went about on my own, determined to make my own discoveries. And so I did. I found a very old wall made of tiles that were arranged in a sort of a cable stitch pattern. You could not detect it on first sight, since it was heavily

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15 Ibid., 14. Original text, 31.

16 For example the Anandilyagwa Australian Aborigines of Groote Eylandt Northern Territories, Australia. I am indebted for this to Katherine Firth, Melbourne.

covered by small white roses, entwined with ivy. Here it happened. As I stood there gazing I heard a small noise and something moving. It was a lizard that came out of the masses of ivy, overtook me and then turned round. Neither of us moved, but we looked at each other. The lizard's gaze seemed to comprise the wisdom of millenia, and I had the feeling that I had known her forever. Curiously, I could and can only think of the animal in terms of "her." For several minutes we stood there, fellow creatures, and I felt strangely soothed, accepted, and sorry when the lizard left.

The yearning to understand the language of the non-human creation has accompanied me from my early childhood, and I always felt attracted by people for whom this seemed to be a matter of fact. My mother's friend Elisabeth, an extremely shy but highly gifted sculptor, one day surprised me by telling me that she could speak "owlish." I accompanied her back home late at night in June, when she started making noises I had never heard before. After a short time an owl sailed on top of us and accompanied us until we had reached Elisabeth's house. Of course she spoke to her plants as well, and I am sure that in the Middle Ages she would have been burnt at the stake.

Another experience of a *reality beyond* which showed me the unity between heaven and earth and a world-in-between, took place in Great Britain one summer. It was a moonlit night and I woke up because of an unfamiliar noise. So I left my room, crept out to the small terrace of the little cottage we had rented. The view was breathtaking: the large garden on the slopes of the Shelsley valley was full of apple trees. Among them the neighbor's ponies munched their grass. The moon light was not harsh, but a very soft and diffused light. For the first time I understood the opening bars of Mendelssohn-Bartholdy's overture *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. To

me, they expressed exactly the diffusion I saw. There was an inexplicable peace and an enchantment beyond words. I would not have been astonished had I seen fairies. Shakespeare must have known about this, when, in *Romeo and Juliet*, he lets Mercutio answer Romeo, who just had had a dream: "...I see Queen Mab hath been with you./ She is the fairies' midwife/ .. she gallops night by night/ Through lovers' brains, and then they dream of love/...This is that very Mab/ That plats the manes of horses in the night/" (Act I, scene IV). The Irish have Mab (Medb) for their fairy queen, and the Welsh word for child or baby is "mab,"[17] so dreams (although not always pleasant ones, as Shakespeare's whimsical Mab demonstrates) and children seem to belong together. Only we adults have forgotten it.[18]

The attempts to retrace my own pattern of a different life, the "inner light," as Sölle calls it, brings me back to the year 1994. My late friend Sibylle, a biologist, who wanted to re-establish the values of the Knights Templar (like truth, integrity, generosity), invited me to her hunting lodge in the mountains shortly before her death. It was to be our farewell for ever. There, in the complete solitude of the Alps, we stayed with only her aged housekeeper. Whenever Sibylle's strength permitted it, we walked the short distance to a mountain brook "to pay our respect to the angel of the brook," as she put it. We passed the huge, ancient fir trees which she addressed as the "watchmen," and at night owls hooted softly around the house. Although we all knew Sibylle would die soon, these days were filled with a perfect peace, where nature and humans lived in harmony.

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[17] *Encyclopædia Britannica,* 15th edition, Chicago 1993, vol. 7, 599. I am indebted for this to my daughter Eva Christina.

[18] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem *Erlkönig (erlking)* is another proof. The father apparently does not dispose of that knowledge his son has. When the adult asks the boy what he is afraid of, he answers: "Don't you see the erlking?" But the father provides him with a 'realistic'



Corvey Benedictine Abbey, 822

But there were other manifestations of this "inner light" or the "breaking in of divine strengths into human reality" as well. When in 1998 my mother died, I stepped onto the small balcony of her room in the clinic. I was able to see the towers of the former Benedictine abbey of Corvey, one of the earliest settlements of Christianity in Northern Germany (founded in 822). Dark clouds were scurrying over the valley of the river Weser, adding to the atmosphere of misery and loss. Suddenly the clouds

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answer: "My son, this is a band of fog" and is unable to see the deadly danger. Beate Pinkerneil, *Das große deutsche Balladenbuch* (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1978), 91.



dispersed for a moment, the sun came through and deep inside me I heard the words once spoken to Joshua (1:5): "I will not fail you or forsake you." As the daughter of a mother educated by the Moravian Brothers, I was used to live with the set text for the day, but I had never had such an experience before. Someone or something had spoken inside me.

The same happened when I had decided to go to America, although deeply uncertain about this step. A friend of mine had given me a postcard with an Isaiah-text earlier that year. However, this friend had not the smallest idea of what I intended to do, not even that I had applied to a college in the USA. Her text (Isaiah 43:16.18) "Thus says the LORD,/who makes a way in the sea,/ a path in the mighty waters,/ Do not remember the former things,/ or consider the things of old./ I am about to do a new thing;/ now it springs forth, do you not/ perceive it?" accompanied me when I had to cross the Atlantic, the "mighty waters." On the third evening after I had arrived, I was asked whether I would like to read a text in the evening service. I was given two texts. One of them was the Isaiah-text. Mere accident? Or is it what Sölle calls the *goal* of her writing: "to bring back the experience of the unknown life as something that was stolen from us before we were even born. I do not to submit absolutely to the coercion of modernity, which Max Weber referred to as the 'disenchantment of the world' and, correspondingly, elevate science to the level of a totalitarian deity next to which we are to have no other Gods."[19]

In my country you can discuss your most private, even intimate, experiences on daytime television. But you certainly cannot speak about your experiences with God. That is supposed to be almost obscene, and at best people will suspect you of

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[19] Ibid., 17. Original text, 35.

narrow fundamentalism. When you are a woman, allowances are made for, one of the rare occasions, when this happens. To believe in God, to tell stories, is still considered to be a woman's domain, but definitely not to be taken seriously. As Sölle stresses, "[t]he trivialization of women exists as an ongoing malevolent belittling: whatever is consistently and without opposition declared to be irrelevant – like so much that women experience, feel, and come to know - loses its language; perhaps it may echo for a while within a person, but it creates no response."[20]

In many respects women and children are seen on the same level: Their experiences can be dismissed as insignificant. This attitude is only surpassed by the treatment of mentally ill people.

From September 2001 until March 2002 a "museum of its own and in a different way" – so the official text of the program – opened in Heidelberg. It was the collection of the psychiatrist Prinzhorn (1886-1933).[21] He had collected those paintings, drawings, sculptures, and other objects by which his patients had expressed themselves. By taking these objects seriously (which a number of his colleagues did not. On the contrary, this type of art was used to discriminate famous artists as "degenerated" in Nazi Germany by contrasting their pieces of art to that of the "lunatics"[22]) he saved them. In the "Long Night of Museums" in 2002 the "composition for hearing" by the Swiss composer Patricia Jünger, *Sehr geehrter Herr – ein Requiem (Honored Sir – A Requiem)* was performed to "enhance and heighten the experience of the exhibited works" [translation mine], meaning the Prinzhorn objects. I cite from the official program: This

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20 Ibid., 13. Original text, 30f.

21 The Prinzhorn Collection was to be seen in New York and in Los Angeles in 2000.

22 http: //prinzhorn.uni-hd.de/geschichte.shtml. 12/8/2002.

> "composition for hearing" is dedicated to the first Swiss female jurist Dr. Emily Kempin-Spyri (1853-1901) who fought through out all her life to be acknowledged at the law court as a woman and to be approved of as an attorney. In 1899 she was taken to the asylum Friedrichsmatt in Basel. The initiatory material for the composition for hearing is a letter by which the jurist with a doctor's degree applied to a pastor for the position of a housekeeper...The letter is an example for a female life, confronted with mechanisms of expulsion and elimination. The anxieties resulting from this insult are usually presented as irrationally or hysterically –'insane'. The goal of the composition for hearing is to demonstrate the protest as a response to a reality into which women have to fit their lives.[translation mine]

"Sehr geehrter Herr" is the opening of the letter which Emily Kempin-Spyri wrote in December 1899, when she lived in the Basel asylum. It is a clear and very rational letter, written by a woman who by no means had any illusions about her situation: "I am completely destitute and living alone. My husband separated from me years ago, my children are scattered around the world, my relations to friends and relatives are cut short. The latter turned their backs on me already fifteen years ago because of my studying law." Of course she does not get the position. As I have shown in "Eros and Sexuality in Nineteenth Century Germany," she will die in the Basel asylum. The mechanisms of belittling or – as Sölle put it – "trivialization"[23] worked on her. Despite her brilliant gifts Emily Kempin-Spyri had no chance because of the simple fact that she was a woman. In a century where Elsli (*Gritli's Kinder*) had to be content with a better place in heaven, where a Heidi was given no education beyond literacy, where little Marie (*Die kleine Jüngerin*) was to die as a true disciple of Jesus, where the *Silly Teenagers* were married as soon as possible to enable the picture of the *safe little* woman, Emily Kempin-Spyri was an alien element. Women like her disturbed that portrait. What would happen if women like her sort became the

standard? Her life even includes the biblical dimension of a father-daughter-conflict, the question of obedience. As the biblical Eve offends God's commandment, so does Emily, because she marries against her father's, the pastor's, wishes. And the craving for knowledge which is inherent in both females has certainly not furthered their positions in life. Emily Kempin-Spyri lived in the 19th century, but the program-text of the "composition for hearing" was written in 2002 and speaks about a "protest as the response to a reality into which women have to fit their lives." This is present tense. So the "ongoing malevolent belittling" of women, which Sölle states (who wrote her book in 1998), has not yet found its end.

In order to confront this process I wrote this thesis. The number of women sacrificed on that sham altar of patriarchy which is not anchored and often ends in deepest despair is more than enough. Sölle warns that "whatever is consistently and without opposition declared to be irrelevant…loses its *language*." So my aim has been to give *voice* to the many wronged women and girls of times bygone, times the products of which we still are, at least to a certain extent.

There is the *inconspicuous* society, my own generation. I showed that many of this generation had been made inconspicuous. There was the heritage of leading models for girls and young women taken over from the 19th century, revised for a short time in World War II, but never genuinely questioned. To write about this, to tell *Anna*'s, my own story, is the first attempt to leave this inconspicuousness. The Nazi heritage had been, to give up questions, because questions until this day are dangerous for every totalitarian regime. To ask questions, to analyze those stories I

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[23] How international the topic of women's 'trivialization' is can be seen by the title the American feminists Carter Heyward and Suzanne R. Hiatt chose: "The Church Ponders Evermore the Trivialization of Women," *Christianity and Crisis*, June 26, 1978, 160.

wrote about, can lead to liberation. If I can see through the motives and intentions of all these children's and adolescents' stories – of any story – this is an act of liberation. By communicating the results to others the possibility to get caught in the trap of a hermeneutic power system may become less.

The first step: *storytelling*

Part of the heritage of the post war society in West Germany (and not only there, as I believe) is to give up one's *childhood* and with it to give up *dreams*. But without being granted a childhood, without dreams, all humankind will have to die, because they will be cut off from their inner selves. The harassed human beings in *Momo* are a warning example as are the quarter life crises of the *Fit For Fun* society of our days. "Make more money" does not help against the cry for authenticity, being *fit* is no remedy against the longing for being accepted as the person I am.

This thesis began with three quotations, each of them defining *one* single step. *Liv Ullmann*'s motto "We have to overcome boundaries, not with a gun in our hand, but by telling stories,"[24] sets the frame: *storytelling*. The realization of this frame has gone beyond its setting as it links human beings with one another. The act of storytelling needs at least two persons (if I do not want to tell stories to myself): the one who tells the story, the other one who listens to it. Scheherazade from the *Arabian Nights*[25] tells her husband, King Sharyar (who is convinced of all women's infidelity and therefore kills them after the wedding night), stories to rescue her life and that of

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24 *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 28, 2./3. Febr., 2002, 55.

25 *Arabian Nights*: *the marvels and wonders of the Thousand and one nights*/ adapted from Richard F. Burston's unexpurgated translation by Jack Zipes (New York: Signet Classic, 1991).

her children. Wilhelm Hauff's merchants in the *Karawane* tell stories to pass the time. Giovanni Boccaccio's (1313-1375) persons in his *Decamerone* [26] tell stories to ascertain that they are still alive, although surrounded by the Plague, Geoffrey Chaucer's (1342-1400) pilgrims tell their stories in the *Canterbury Tales* [27] to shorten their way to Canterbury Cathedral, the destination of their pilgrimage. In *Spare Change News*, the weekly magazine of the homeless, Susan R. Horton gives us a different aspect of storytelling: "In the end, our stories are all that stand between us and the cold winds of isolation and despair. They comfort and teach us, and connect us to one another and to our deepest selves."[28] All of them are overcoming *boundaries* to a certain degree. But everyone who tells her or his story needs more. They need the trust in those who listen (and sometimes courage from those who tell stories), because women in particular have to speak up against the throttling experiences of a being told "What you are writing is not worth while/too trivial/against etiquette/an act of fouling of the nest." The "ongoing malevolent belittling" is still at work. I saw it in my classes, where boys and young men expressed themselves incessantly, whereas the girls and young women often thought that they had nothing or little to say, because they were taught so by society.

The second step: *healing* wounds – establishing *democracy* and civilization

The second step is marked by *Carol Gilligan*'s motto "Women may hold a key to replacing violence with speaking, bringing private feuds into public places, and

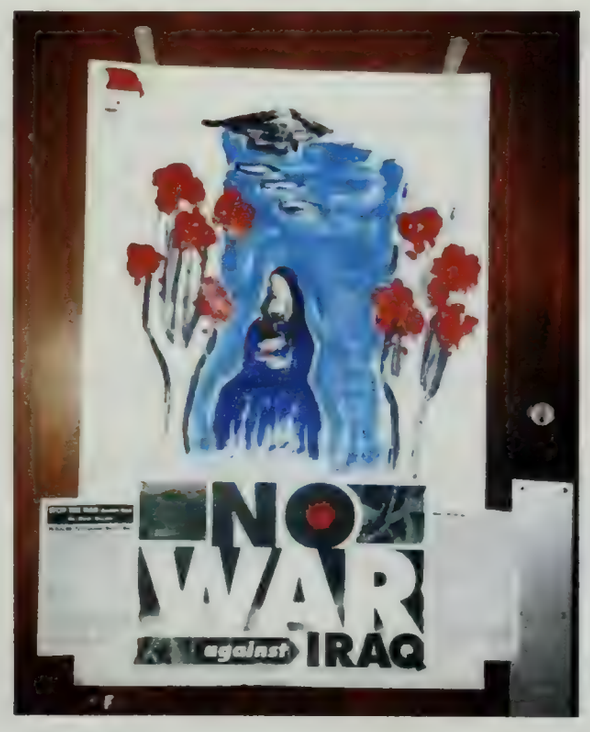
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[26] Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, transl. by Guido Waldman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

[27] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. by Steve Ellis (Harlow [England]: Longman, 1998).

[28] Susan R. Horton, *Spare Change News*, Jan. 23 – Febr.5, 2003, 4.

healing wounds which otherwise fester from generation to generation – in short, to establish democracy and civilization." Here storytelling ("speaking") no longer is a singular act of privacy. Here we are confronted with a choice: *violence* versus *speaking*. Like Ullmann the *gun* is exchanged for the act of *speaking*. But Gilligan opens up a new prospect: *healing wounds* and *establishing democracy*. To "establish democracy and civilization" has become the most important task in this world, to my belief. This strong wish made it possible for me to overcome my deep fears of ever becoming "conspicuous" and made me step out of my "invisibility" by demonstrating against the war against Iraq. I painted a poster, using elements of Christian iconography, but in reality I painted an Arab woman dressed like the Jewish Miriam/ Mary in the Christian paintings of the Middle Ages. This woman seems to sit in a rose bower which in reality is constructed of the remainders of the twin towers of the World Trade Center. The "roses" are blood drops, the woman and her child are endangered by a bomber.



A message of *healing* and being responsible for the world at large is expressed by the feminist theologian Judith Plaskow, as well. In her essay "Feminist Judaism and the Repair of the World" she emphasizes that "feminism – while it has not always understood itself as a religious movement – has tied a vision of women's wholeness to a broad program for social and political action."[29] In this essay she elaborates on the fascinating "Kabbalistic concept of *tikkun olam*...*Tikkun* refers to the method through which repair [of the world] is to be accomplished ...In embracing the world while cognizant of the presence of the sacred in all aspects of reality, human beings can elevate the holy sparks present in the whole creation."[30] Plaskow underlines that "Jewish feminists have described women's liberation as an aspect of *tikkun*, an ingredient in the repair and transformation of the world that is part of its redemption."[31] The Jewish feminist Judith Plaskow teaches the German woman Brigitte Löwe about *healing* and *liberation*. With the Nazi background of my people and my own father in particular I am deeply grateful to come to know Jews whose families or they themselves have escaped from the *shoah* [annihilation], a term I prefer to that of *holocaust*, because a holocaust means a *whole burnt offering*,[32] given to YHWH. This genocide, however, was connected with idols that were man-made like Hitler. It had nothing to do with the God of Israel and was certainly not issued by HIM, although Western Christianity had taught the topic of the "Christ murder" throughout centuries, so that some Christians saw the shoah as its consequence (two thousand years after!). The "Christ murder" topic even reached me in Cambridge. In

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29 Judith Plaskow, "Feminist Judaism and the Repair of the World," in Carol Adams, ed., *Ecofeminism and the Sacred (*New York: Continuum, 1999), 71.

30 Ibid., 75.

31 Ibid., 77.

one of my classes a Jewish fellow student wrote about it. As a child she had felt as responsible for the "Christ murder" as I myself had felt responsible for the shoah. We both learned that we suffered from astoundingly similar fears, albeit from far different origins and depths of suffering: she was afraid to be seen as the "loud" Jew, I as the "ugly" German for example. It was the first time for me that I could speak about these fears at all, and for me this certainly issued a piece of redemption – to *speak* up. There were other situations where reconciliation "happened." At that vigil for which I had painted the "Arab madonna" a lady strongly objected it "since not all of us are Christians," as she said. I told her I would gladly remove the poster but that I had only made use of a Christian icon for a different purpose. So we discussed my ideas and in the end she said: "O.K. You have convinced me," and only then did she tell me that she was a Jew from Europe who had escaped the shoah. Even my hairdresser in Cambridge is a Jew from Vienna, who speaks German to me in order to brush up her German for her phone calls with her old mother in Israel who still speaks German. This for me means reconciliation with my past, my fears, for which I am immensely grateful.

The third step: *reconciliation*

Reconciliation, the third step, involves more than establishing democracy: The healing of wounds first has to take place in individuals, then in society. *Storytelling* per se is the first step, *establishing democracy* another one. But the third (or the second?) step has to be *reconciliation*. At the already mentioned conference on Religion and the Feminist Movement I saw women full of anger or wrath, women

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[32] Dorothee Sölle and Luise Schottroff, *Jesus of Nazareth*, trans. by John Bowden (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 146.

who had forgotten how to smile, because of what they had to experience. Anger is a very necessary emotion. In the course of this thesis I proved how dangerous the absence of anger could be. The tract stories about little Marie (*Die kleine Jüngerin*) and Spyri's Vrony (*Ein Blatt auf Vronys Grab*) showed its lethal consequences. Little Marie as well as Vrony were never allowed to see or express themselves as angry persons, although both of them had the potential for anger. Emily Kempin-Spyri's life ended in a lunatic asylum. Would she have been there had she expressed the anger she certainly must have felt about the unjust treatment of her father, her family, of society at large? But anger is dangerous should it become the final emotion. Anger can ossify human beings. All of us know those persons who have nothing to report but repeat the wrong-doings of others year in, year out.Virginia Woolf observed it in Charlotte Brontë about whom she wrote: "The woman…had more genius in her than Jane Austen; but if one reads them [her pages] over and marks that jerk in them, that indignation, one sees that she will never get her genius expressed whole and entire…She will write in a rage where she should write calmly. She will write foolishly where she should write wisely."[33] Rosemary Radford Ruether rightly emphasizes: "Only by experiencing one's anger and alienation can one *move on*, with real integrity, to another level of truth."[34] Anger has to *act*. The angry Jesus (Matthew 21:12) turned over the tables of the money changers and merchants in the temple. But he did not remain in this state. I myself had to learn how to be angry with my unjust father, and this healed me from depression. My *action* consisted in writing.

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33 Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (San Diego: Harvest, 1989), viiif.

34 Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), 188 [italics mine].

The courage to tell my story, to give *voice* is one step. *Reconciliation* can only take place if there is someone who clearly states that injustice has been done, that act which Alice Miller calls the *understanding witness*. Its immense importance could be seen in the process of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I saw it again in the course of this conference on Religion and the Feminist Movement, where wronged women found themselves in solidarity with others. Only the acceptance of my neediness (which is painful enough in itself) and the experience of solidarity with others can bring about healing. So reconciliation is the strongest form of liberation because it leads to a healing of the soul.

This is expressed in my third quotation, the one by *Margaret Atwood*. It has been taken from her *Handmaid's Tale*,[35] that novel depicting the cruelty of the narrow minded fundamentalistic believers of Gilead, an imaginary story about an imaginary Cambridge, Massachusetts. The words spoken here could have been my own words, because it was I who had "given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it [couldn't] be helped." I came to Cambridge with the motto of the *Bremen Town Musicians*, four "useless" animals of yet another *Grimm's fairy tales*: "We're off to Bremen where there are better things than death."[36] Cambridge was to become my Bremen. I was here for *reconciling* with my past. Since I had given up teaching because I did not seem to fit into the teaching scene of that once so beloved school any longer, I felt like Wilhelm Raabe's [37] figure of the Magister Buchius, a teacher

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35 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1987), 378.

36 Jack Zipes, trans., *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (New York: Bantam, 1988), vol. I, 115.

37 Wilhelm Raabe (German poet: 1831-1910, who had lived in my little hometown in the Weserbergland for a while).

who was left behind, when his school, the meanwhile protestant monastery school of Amelungsborn moved over to Holzminden (where I actually attended this school).[38]



Amelungsborn, Former Cistercian Monastery, 12th century

Roots

This Weserbergland in Lower Saxony (and with fringes of Westphalia as well) stands for my own *roots*. The fairy tale country is a bewitching country with its breathtaking views, its chalk cliffs, hills and mountains; with its billowing yellow rape fields and the sweet smell of honeysuckle that makes you crave for paradise; this fairy tale country with the glittering river Weser and its old gods' mountain, which the monks renamed into "cur," since the German word for "Götter" [gods] is so near to

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38 Wilhelm Raabe, *Das Odfeld*. Sämtliche Werke, her. i.A. der Braunschweigischen



"Köter" [cur]; this fairy tale country with forests full of dark blue columbines and rare orchids; with its deep, deep sky that makes at least me wish I could dissolve in all its blueness; this enchanted country with its "cruel pockets" of sometimes narrow-mindedness is *my* country.



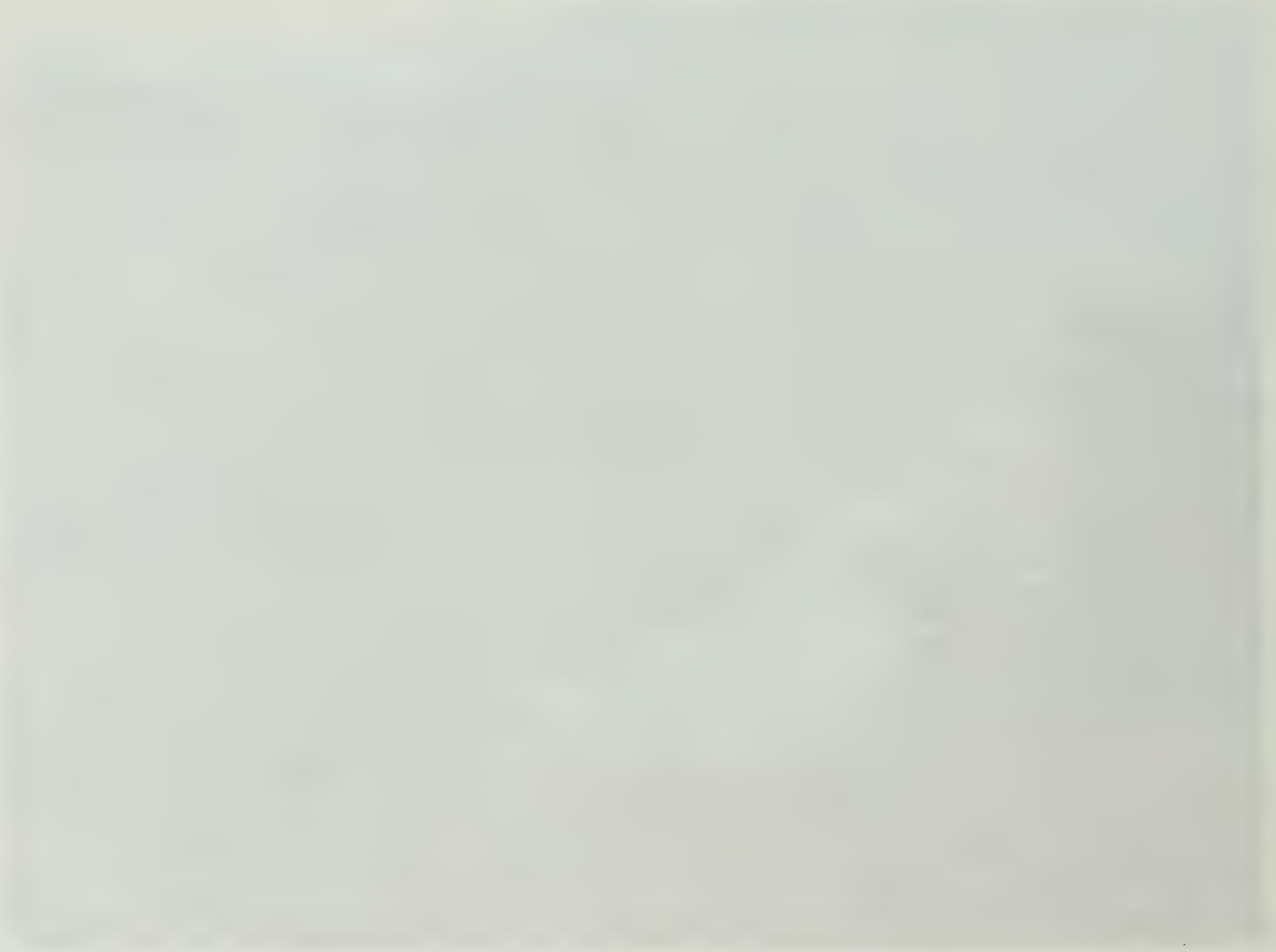
Map of the Weserbergland

Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft vol. 17(Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 7-220.

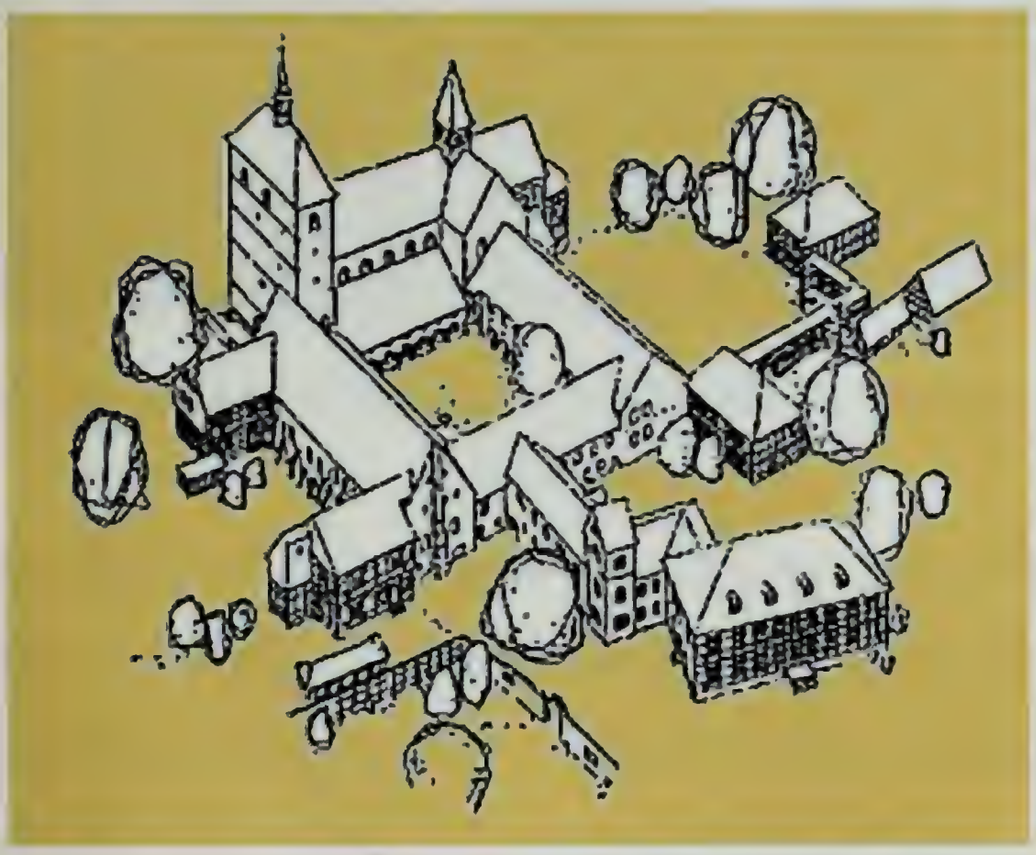


The River Weser seen from Schloß Fürstenberg

It is a farmers' country first of all, with strict rules for the upbringing of girls and the appropriate behavior of women, certainly not designed for revolutionary ideas. And yet it bread the first woman historian in Germany (or what could be taken for "Germany" at the time of about 1000 C.E.), Hrosvith of Gandersheim (Hrosvit/Hroswitha/Roswitha von Gandersheim, c. 930 – d. after 973 C. E.), only a few miles away from my little hometown. She called herself the "strong *voice* of Gandersheim."[39] She was a canon, a playwright, a poet, a woman with self-confidence in the Benedictine nunnery at Gandersheim, the royal abbey, then a center for intellectual and spiritual activity. To me she is not only a poet but has the quality of a



mystic as well, when she writes "I also know that God has given me a sharp mind…so that the worthlessness of my own ignorance may be ennobled by the interweaving of this nobler material's shine, and that, thus, the Giver of my talent all the more be justly praised through me, the more limited the female intellect is believed to be."[40] Mystics defy the life style of their respective age, deliberately or not, and female mystics in particular. They never fit in.



Convent Fischbeck

She is not the only example for early female learnedness in this area. The convent for canons, Fischbeck, was founded 955 C.E. by the noblewoman Helmburgis. According to the legend of the famous Fischbeck tapestry Helmburgis'

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[39] http://www.womeninworldhistory.com/notables.html. 1/3/2003.

[40] *The plays of Hrotsvit of Gandersheim*/ transl. by Katharina Wilson, Garland library of medieval literature, v. 62 (New York: Garland Pub., 1989), 5. Cited after http://www.roanoke.infi.net/~ddisse/hrotsvit.html. 1/3/2003.



Tapestry of the Convent Fischbeck with the story of the founder Helmburgis

husband accused her of infidelity during the long years of his absence (what might he himself have done in those years?) when he fought for Emperor Otto I (the same emperor who chaperoned Gandersheim). Helmburgis' husband insisted on a divine ordeal. So she and her maid were tied to a carriage, drawn by wild horses. But by the grace of God the horses were attracted by a brook (Lower Saxon dialect: Beke = *Beck*) and so they stopped to drink. The two women's ties vanished, Helmburgis drank from the water, too, and found a golden little fish (German: *Fisch*) in her hand. So she vowed to found a convent and call it *Fischbeck*, [41] the rare story of a wronged woman with a positive ending. Today, more than one thousand years after, there are still women in this convent, although no longer canons, but single women of Protestant faith, some of them feminists.





Convent Fischbeck today

This landscape does not only comprise the learned women of the tenth century and myself, it was the landscape of my second grandmother, who had no education beyond her primary school years. She is the one about whom I know next to nothing. Hermine Dorothea Maria, the second of my grandmothers, to whom I dedicated my thesis, was from this landscape. She was born and raised there and never left in all her

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41 http://www.stift-fischbeck.de/wandteppich.html. 1/4/2003.



life. The womanist Alice Walker writes: "And so our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of flower they themselves never hoped to see: or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read,"[42] and the African American singer Ysaye M. Barnwell tells us in her song *We are…*: "We are our grandmothers' prayer."[43] Had Hermine Dorothea Maria wished for a granddaughter? Was I her answer to prayer?

What do I know about this other *root* of mine? "She was so humble that she ate the feet (sic) of geese"/died of pneumonia when she was in her early fifties/was a lively, beautiful girl when engaged to be married/was a still beautiful, but melancholy woman with sad eyes, when she was in her forties/ was a rich farmer's daughter whose secretary bureau was given to me when I was fourteen years old. This is all I know about my grandmother on my father's side. The only *facts* I know about her are that bureau which is a precious centerpiece in my apartment, and I inherited the sofa of her living room, the armchairs, the beautiful table with its cut edges and elaborately wrought feet, after my grandfather died. So I possess the furniture of her dowry, and yet I do not know anything substantial about the person who lived with it. I possess two photos as well, but what I read from them is mere guesswork. Yet the difference between the two is most striking. Was she unhappy in the marriage with my thrifty grandfather? Were the marvelous roses he used to cultivate from wild exemplars for her or did he not allow them to be cut and arranged in luscious bouquets? I know so much about him, about his predilection for these flowers, his love of music and books, because I share these preferences. But how come that I know next to nothing about

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[42] Alice Walker, *In Search of our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983), 240.

her? It was he who proudly told me about her "humbleness," and I do remember how deeply shocked I was about the idea to eat "geese feet," even as a little girl in times where food was scarce. Who would eat those yellow feet? What a strange woman she must have been! I definitely knew even at that time that I never wanted to be like her in that respect.

On her engagement photo she gives the impression of a resolute vivacious person, full of energy. So why did not she say "no," when my father was sent to the district town in order to attend the monastery school of Amelungsborn, then Gymnasium für Jungen, at the age of nine, where he had to stay as a boarder, never allowed to come home the ten kilometers of distance, unless for holidays? Why did she never send him a parcel as he later on told us? What had happened to her? Why was she so silenced that the only story known about her deals with the so-called "humbleness?" Did this fit in into the prevailing portraits of women at that time? There are no letters left, no diary like my grandfather's which hardly mentions her. Grandmother Georgine left me beautifully embroidered table cloths which she herself had done. By Hermine I possess some exquisite linen table cloths with enormous monograms: *HH*, her maiden monograms, not *HS,* done in a highly elaborate way, white in white. Did she do these herself? She left me a table cloth for a table seating twelve persons, with the illustration of the Last Supper woven into it, certainly an unusual table cloth even at her time. Was she a pious person? No one ever told me about her preferences.

When I write all this down, I cannot believe that I never asked anybody about

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[43] Ysaye M Barnwell, *We Are*...no. 5 from the song suite *Lessons*. Word and music by Ysaye M. Barnwell (Washington. DC: DC Press, 1991).

her. She was dead, when my parents married, and she never knew about me. So, was that the reason? Why did my father never speak about her – apart from the complaint about the missing parcel? Was it painful for him to remember her? What traits, what propensities do I share with her? Grandmother Georgine, about whom I know so much, grandmother Hermine, the silent woman, *silenced* woman? I want to give *voice* to both of them. In dedicating this thesis to them I acknowledge their heritage in me. I am the granddaughter of both of them, of Georgine, who could express herself so well and whose beautiful handwriting is still before me, and of Hermine, the silent woman, whose fate was kept in the dark, unless there was nobody there any longer who knew her.

The still "speaking" grandmother, Georgine, actually gave me my Christian name, since my parents could not agree on it. I always connected this name with the Irish St. Bride, whom I adopted as my patron saint. In her, the patron saint of cow*girls*, blacksmiths, and poets I could always find an echo of myself: a person very much down to earth, and often very much in the skies. And even my former maiden name fits: Schmidt, smith – surely there had been one blacksmith in the long line of my ancestors. So I always liked my name since I linked it with both, grandmother Georgine and the Irish saint, although in my strictly Protestant family there was no room for saints, male or female.

What has been given to me by Hermine? I would love to think that my enthusiasm for entertaining guests from time to time might stem from her. May be that this was an unfulfilled dream, the "seed" that she had handed over to me? One of the pictures which I loved most in my childhood is by the Swedish painter Carl

Larsson.[44] It belongs to his cycle *Spadarfvet – mitt lilla lantbruk* (*Spadarfvet – our place in the country*) my favorite book then, and has the title *Julaftonen*: *Christmas Eve*. Here a whole family, old and young ones, servants and masters, neighbors, relatives are assembled at a huge table full of delicious food, an open fire crackling in the background. This was and is my "image of abundance." Perhaps Hermine had had a similar dream, before she settled in my grandfather's cold and always draughty house?

The long procession of silenced women from Emily Kempin-Spyri to perhaps my own grandmother Hermine are only a minute detail in the immense and unfathomable line of wronged women, of women literally made speechless and without voice all over this world. And yet they live. They live and regain their *voice* when we as human beings speak about them, help them to regain authenticity, when we as females and males work for the change of this world to become a more just, a more inhabitable planet for all human beings, all creation at large. To quote Judith Plaskow once more:

> This institutionalized separation of spirituality and politics, proceeding from the same hierarchy of mind and body that supports the disparagement of women and nature, represents a dualism to be rejected. When spirituality is understood from a feminist perspective – not in otherworldy terms, but as the fullness of our relationship to ourselves, others, the earth, and God – it cannot possibly be detached from the conditions of our existence. [45]

The "fullness of our relationship to ourselves" can only come into existence when we *know* about ourselves: our origins, our fate, our *roots*. I myself am shaped by my ancestors, by what I have experienced. But I am formed by more. In the times of the deepest affliction the knowledge about those people from the Weserbergland

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44 Carl Larsson (Swedish painter, 1853-1919).

45 Plaskow, 71.

Wilhelm Raabe had depicted in the already quoted novel *Das Odfeld*[46] or in his novel *Höxter und Corvey*[47] helped me pull through. I learned about their sufferings in the manifold wars that had come across this region, starting from the Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

That helped me to see myself in a long line of fellow creatures to whom I belonged, who had been wronged, suffered, but had survived. I saw the many women before my inner eye who had taken up the work of men when their husbands, fathers, brothers had been in the war and often enough did not return. Despite their fate many of them either had not lost their dignity or they had regained it. My childhood was full of war-widows who did what had to be done or those unmarried aunts or "spinsters" who made a child life in the forties breathable. My "relationship to…others" is shaped by them, as well as my "relationship to…the earth." My grandmother Georgine with her large garden, her one source of survival, the many childhood-widows with their beautiful flower gardens, my mother's garden – those heart-aching places of childhood memories, they shaped my relationship to this earth. To give up my own "magic garden" with its white *Kiftsgate* roses rambling in the cypresses, with the white and red streaked blossoms of *Ferdinand Pichard*, its deep red *Sympathie*, its pale pink climbing *New Dawn*, its sweet smelling purple pink *Louise Odier*, the noble shapes of the pink *Queen Elizabeth* or the sun-colored, richly perfumed rose *Amber Queen* was only possible in the deepest of all winters, literally and otherwise. To touch earth, to feel it crumble between my fingers is still the greatest remedy for me.

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46 Odfeld: either "Bleak Field" or Campus Odini "Odin's Field".

47 Wilhelm Raabe, *Höxter und Corvey*. Sämtliche Werke, Braunschweiger Ausgabe, vol. 11 (Braunschweig: Verlagsanstalt Hermann Klemm, 1956), 261-353.

Wilhelm Raabe speaks of gardens lost as "sunken gardens,"[48] starting from the very first, the garden of Eden, the *paradise*.

I have spoken about the "seeds" for a "relationship to…God" already when I wrote about my grandmother Georgine. This has shaped me, has made me the person I am.

Judith Plaskow summarizes all this as "spirituality." Our ways to achieve it are different. One possibility for me to undertake this may be to follow the bold example of an unknown little girl of about six years whom I watched during a service in one of Cambridge's churches. Not only did she get up and danced in a perfect pose throughout the whole liturgy, but she went to the Eucharist twice as well, twice asking for the Bread of Life. Perhaps we have to do the same in order to change the world for the better, in order to strengthen the Christ in us. It can provide us with a new *language* of a deeper understanding. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe knew about it, when in his *West-Östlicher Diwan* (*West-Eastern Divan*) under the heading *paradise* he refers to a language spoken between humans and angels, a language with a "hidden grammar" and a declension of "poppies and roses."[49] It is the language of *Eros, Sexuality, and the Spirit*[50] altogether (although Goethe's finding has little to do with Christianity), no longer split into separate entities but being all embodied as a whole. The *new* grammar, the *new* declension is necessary, because our old one has been

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[48] Wilhelm Raabe, *Meister Autor oder Die Geschichten vom versunkenen Garten.* Sämtliche Werke, Braunschweiger Ausgabe, vol. 11 (Braunschweig: Verlagsanstalt Hermann Klemm, 1956), 137.

[49] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Der west-östliche Diwan. Abteilung Chuld Nameh: Buch des Paradieses.* Sammlung Dieterich (Leipzig: Dieterichsche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1943), vol. 125, 130.

[50] Course taught by Kwok Pui-Lan, EDS, June 2001.

polluted and cannot be used any longer. Even an "I love you" has become a cheap and every day's coin. This new language could enable us to keep or regain the "window of vulnerability," as Dorothee Sölle expresses it in her poem [51] :

The window of vulnerability
so the military say
in order to give reasons for re-armament
has to be closed

One window of vulnerability
is my skin
without humidity and without touch
I must die

The window of vulnerability
will be walled up
my country cannot live

we need light
in order to think
we need air
in order to breathe
we need a window
skywards

If this can be brought about or at least get started by *storytelling*, then storytelling is truly an *act of liberation.*

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[51] Sölle, *Und ist noch nicht erschienen*, 109f [translation mine].

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APPENDIX 1

Paintings of Genesis 3

1 The Serpent

The turquoise of the background is rather static, it comprises the sacred.
The serpent is seen as a holy animal, full of wisdom, protecting the apple like a womb.
The color gold shows the animal's importance.
This picture is the only one with a 'frame', showing symbols of the sun, the moon, and the stars. Its upper part is blank and in its gold reserved for the divine, the part down below shows spirals which are connected with the mundane, with the earth, and therefore are brown.

2 Eden

This painting comprises only four colors: green for the paradise, gold for the sacred, brown for the created, red for passion.
There is no sky as this painting represents the depth and the secret of eden. The tree has golden fruit, which are deliberately painted ambiguously, they can be apples, the forbidden fruit, or roses, the flowers of love.
The golden ying-yang sign symbolizes the being together of two persons, who belong together. Their passion is demonstrated by the red.
I wanted this picture to breathe a great quietude, because those things that are really sacred, go without words. [not included]

3 Vessel of all Evil

This picture shows the results of the fall. The three women are the representatives of what happened to women. The left one is depicted as the great *seductress* (red hair, red dress). But she gets stoned. The woman to the right is dressed like a woman of the Middle Ages. She is *burned at stake*. The one in the middle is *silenced* and wrapped up like a mummy. The signs **sin** and **death** cover her head, her body shows the signs **great whore**, **vessel of evil**, **flesh**, **submission**, **mulier taceat in ecclesia** (woman is to keep silent in the church).
The color of the sky is turquoise, but this time it does not represent the color of the sacred. It has been transformed into an evil sky, as has the earth which has the color of the barren wilderness, "enriched" by the red of the flames, the slashes of blood. So the red of passion has been transformed into something evil, as well.

4 I am Mary/ I loved my baby/for which eternally I must wear/ the patriarchal crown/ I beseech you, my sisters, help me remove the weight/ and lay it down. (Janet Crawford and Erice Webb)

Mary is half hidden behind a richly embroidered curtain. This represents the rich clothes of the clergy. The green of creation is enhanced by gold, the red of passion encrusted by gems. Mary herself is set into a duck blue sham sky with white sham clouds. She herself is bloodless, as is her baby. She has to wear a crown which is much too heavy for her and is a mixture between a crown and a pope's miter. The red of passion is only to be seen in the red of the cross. Mary is totally dressed in blue and gold, showing that she belongs to a different realm, no longer linked with the earth. She wears Turkish slippers and stands on the sickle of the moon, turned the other way round for better halt.

5 I hope you dance

The last painting shows a Midsummer Night's dance under trees. The green is no longer the green of eden, but shows at least some resemblance, as do the two trees. The sky is no longer a sacred realm, but definitely mundane. The red of passion is on the people's clothes and their wreaths. The former gold has changed into yellow. The people represent both sexes and all ages, colors, races. The title is taken from a song by LeeAnn Womack "I hope you dance". This song was played in the services by Carter Heyward during the week of March 1, 2001.

APPENDIX 2

Paintings "Jephtha's Daughter"

1. **"Great Expectations"**
A Mediterranean landscape with an androgynous girl with a faint resemblance of Sandro Boticelli's "Spring." She is dressed in white, symbol of virginity. It is a veil-like material, so the poppies shine through, hinting at her future death, the burning at stakes.

2. **"Come ye daughters, help me wailing"**
The background is in subdued, faded pink. The wailer is alone in the middle, surrounded by seven mourning women in a semi circle, all dressed in brownish-black. They are supported by many more women like pale gray shades. They are all those women who suffered from male injustice in the past.

3. **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me"**
The model for the white figure in the middle has been taken from the mourning figure at the entrance to the chapel, now opposite the Refectory. This figure kneels on a sort of altar with no fundament and ending up in nowhere. The blackness around the figure is like a shrine (Aida, Antigone) into which this figure will be put forever. The black-green firs are giving no hope, there is no sky, no bird, nor any other animal, no human being.

4. **"For four days every year the daughters of Israel ... go out to lament the daughter of Jephtha the Gileadite"**
These are no powerless women. The strong pink background, the "female" color, refers to it. They are exceptionally long figures, drawn in an archetypal way. Their faces without color resemble women of all colors, races, nations.

5. **"I will survive – will I survive?"**

After I had painted the biblical cycle, I wanted to give my version: The girl is not burnt at stakes. But she pays an enormous price, the memory of what her father intended to do with her will always be with her as long as she lives. So she is haunted by the demons of the past from time to time and has to be very strong, if she really wants to survive. She has to be humble, as well, since to my belief the humble only will survive.
She stands on the beach, watching the sea. (Later this reminded me of Caspar David Friedrich's painting "Monk At Sea.") She is alone, but she is alive. [Not included]

6. **"Regaining dignity"**

These figures are still surrounded by what they have experienced, but they have overcome. A fellow student told me: "They look as if they were getting larger every minute."













Episcopal Divinity School: Author (middle) and fellow students

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